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When U.S. Mennonites looked for ways to respond to the devastation of World War I in Europe, they found their opportunity **among Friends**



Minding
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Memory

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In this issue



On the cover: Workers with the American Friends Service Committee in France following World War I pose for a photo. Among them are a number of Mennonites. Back row, far left are (left to right) Eli Stoltzfus and Pason Miller. In the center with the straw hat is French Mennonite Pierre Sommer. To his right is S.E. Allgyer and N.E. Byers. Lying in the front with his head in spot light is D.C. Kauffman.



Page 3: In an excerpt from an unpublished manuscript, Guy F. Hershberger recounts how U.S. Mennonites joined with the Quakers to respond to the destruction in Europe after World War I.



Page 7: The annual directory of North American Mennonite and related historical organizations, intended to foster connections among archives, libraries, societies, interpretive centers, and other involved in historical ministries.



Page 11: Reports on a psychological evaluation of conscientious objectors in one military camp during World War I.

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Seven of the nearly 50 U.S. Mennonites who served with the American Friends Service Committee in France following World War I (left to right): Ernest Stahley, Asa M. Hertzler, Christopher Gerber, J. Roy Allgyer, — Miller, Floyd Yoder, and O.B. Gerig.

Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen



A Very Commendable Medium

Mennonite collaboration with Quaker World War I relief work

By Guy F. Hershberger



On June 8, 1917, barely two months after the United States entered World War I, R. L. Kelly, the president of Earlham College, a Quaker institution, gave the commencement address at Goshen College. In it he incidentally referred to the work of reconstruction that the Friends were carrying on in France. Kelly reported to the American Friends Service Committee, "One young man was particularly interested. I think if thought desirable it would be entirely possible to open this question with the Mennonite brethren."¹

The Goshen student's interest was a harbinger of what was to come. By the end of the year, the church as a whole was ready for action. The Mennonite Church in December organized the Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers. Even before the commission was organized, funds were flowing in. The treasurer of the new organization reported that during December contributions for war sufferers amounted to \$6,497.70.² These contributions had come from all sections of the church, and there were also contributions from the Old Order Amish and Conservative churches. In the *Gospel Herald* of December 13, Goshen president J. E. Hartzler said:

There ought to be several hundred young men in the church who would volunteer their service for one year or more to do war relief work. ... There ought to be 500 men in the church who would write their personal checks for \$1,000 each toward a fund of one half million dollars for war relief and construction. ... Every member of the church should do more than the soldier on the firing line. ... We must go the 'second mile,' and as a church we must do more toward relief and reconstruction that can possibly be done through military avenues.³

Many Mennonites were not satisfied with merely giving money to an outside organization.

A French woman pushes cart along a rubble-strewn road in Neuville, in the western part of the country.

Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen

But since the Mennonite Church had no relief work of its own, it had to either inaugurate such a work at once or contribute funds to other organizations. Since the latter seemed the more feasible procedure, the MRCWS inquired into the work being done by the AFSC. MRCWS president Aaron Loucks explained that the AFSC had already sent 130 workers from America and that, with the English Friends, there were more than 300 Quakers in France. Their workers were volunteers, serving without salary, and the administration was very economical, making it a “very commendable medium” through which the Mennonites might give their service.⁴ The AFSC was created in April 1917 and soon was given the opportunity to form a unit to work under the general direction of the civilian service of the American Red Cross in France. By July the AFSC had several workers on the field. Larger numbers followed in later months, and soon the combined British and American Quaker effort in France had developed into a work of major importance.⁵

On January 26, 1918, the executive committee of the MRCWS took official action approving the AFSC and also the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (later known as Near East Relief) as agencies through which Mennonite relief work should be done. Mennonite relief funds would be contributed to these organizations, and the secretary of the MRCWS was given the responsibility of organizing among the sisters’ sewing circles of the church a program of sewing and knitting for war sufferers. It was also decided to inform the

church that the secretary was ready to receive applications of people wishing to engage in reconstruction work under the AFSC.⁶

An explanatory article in *Gospel Herald* suggested that the most important contribution of the Mennonites would need to be in the form of money and clothing and that “only a few can go abroad.”⁷ But there is evidence that many people in the church were anxious for something more than this. On February 9, 1918, MRCWS treasurer G. L. Bender sent a check of \$4,000 to the AFSC and reported that the new organization had received between \$30,000 and \$40,000 for relief. The letter also revealed that many Mennonites were not satisfied with merely giving money to an outside organization. They would at least like to see their own relief workers accompanying their gifts. Bender wrote:

We feel that if we cannot get any of our boys to France under your committee that we should open up work ourselves. Personally, we would rather work through you. We feel it would be saving money to do so. What can you give us in the way of a definite answer so that we can inform our people? It will be a great help to us to get money if we can give our people something definite. We are receiving letters in which the sentiment expressed is that the money will be coming if we can do something definite.⁸

Although the feeling grew that the church should operate its own foreign relief program, the MRCWS was even younger than the AFSC, and its leaders were less experienced than the Quakers in the necessary techniques for carrying on such a work and had few necessary connections for presenting their case to the government in a convincing manner. Furthermore, the Mennonites had no European unit with three years of experience to which they could tie their work as did the AFSC in the case of the British Friends.

The AFSC executive board soon announced its readiness to receive applications from members of the Church of the Brethren and the various Mennonite groups for reconstruction and relief work in France. The AFSC had recently received a call from the American Red



Cross for 300 men to be assigned to its civilian work at the rate of 25 a week.⁹ The MRCWS received a supply of application blanks, and interested Mennonites were urged to file their applications. Qualified men would be accepted on condition that the church they represent would contribute to the work of AFSC at least \$1,000 per year per man accepted. The MRCWS had already committed itself to contributions that would provide for the expenses of a large number of men. By May 27, 1918, 30 Mennonite applications had been accepted by the AFSC and three men had actually sailed for Europe.¹⁰

The AFSC was very appreciative of the Mennonite support. Early in September 1918, AFSC executive secretary Wilbur K. Thomas informed Loucks of the organization's desire for closer cooperation with the Mennonites and extended an invitation "to your branch of the Mennonite church" to appoint two people to meet with the AFSC at its next meeting.¹¹ Sometime after this meeting, on September 26, 1918, the Mennonites were invited to appoint representatives as associate members of the AFSC. The Brethren in Christ church, which was also supporting the AFSC work, was likewise invited to appoint two associate members.¹² It is doubtful, however, whether this proposed relationship ever meant very much. By the beginning of 1919, the MRCWS was already taking steps to send relief workers to the Near East, and by the end of the year most of the French reconstruction service was drawing to a close.

An interesting feature of the Mennonite cooperation with the AFSC was the appearance of Quaker speakers in Mennonite meetings for the purpose of presenting the relief and construction program and explaining what the congregations could do for its support at home. In late November 1918, William B. Hawley reported to Aaron Loucks that he had spent much time in recent weeks visiting various Mennonite communities and had "spoken to thousands of young people." One week was in Pennsylvania and Maryland, where he had "nine meetings amongst the Mennonites of Chambersburg, Hagerstown, Hanover, etc., and had a most interesting visit."¹³ Isaac Sharpless also had arrangements to visit some of the Pennsylvania churches as well as some farther west. On April 9, 1919, he spoke at Goshen College, the meeting having been arranged by Bender.¹⁴



One of the purposes of these visits was to encourage the Mennonite sewing circles in the making of garments to be distributed by the relief workers abroad. In one letter to Loucks, Hawley referred to the "the matter of sewing amongst the sisters," which he called "an important subject. We have instituted a cutting machine and are now sending unassembled garments to the different districts to be made up by the various committees."¹⁵ When the European war came it was natural that the attention of the sewing circles should be drawn to the war sufferers. In the absence of a more satisfactory channel of service, some of the circles began to make contributions to the local Red Cross, despite its too-close association with the war effort. As soon as the MRCWS was organized, however, and it was announced that its relief contributions would be channeled through the AFSC, the local sewing circles in all sections of the church gave their support to the new movement.¹⁶

J. Roy Allgyer, a Mennonite member of the American Friends Service Committee reconstruction unit in France. He was also a member of a three-person team appointed by the Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers to explore post-war relief possibilities in Germany, Austria, and Russia.

Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen

The AFSC published a series of bulletins describing various aspects of its work, including its clothing program, with instructions for sewing and knitting.

Essential information from these bulletins was relayed to the church through a regular column of "Relief Notes" and special articles in *Gospel Herald*. One article by the secretary of MRCWS in March 1918, for example, recommended that, for the sake of efficiency, each local congregation should have

a purchasing committee, a cutting committee, and a packing committee. The AFSC provided garment patterns that could be obtained through the MRCWS. Purchasing committees were encouraged to buy materials by the bolt and obtain them at discount prices for this special purpose whenever possible.¹⁷

It was not long until garments finished by the local sewing circles began to find their way to the collection centers from whence they were sent to the field. Early in June 1918, *Gospel Herald* reported receipt by the AFSC office in Philadelphia of shipments from 24 Mennonite congregations in 13 states from Pennsylvania to Oregon. The estimated value of these shipments was \$962.67. The largest single shipment in the report was that of the East Union sewing circle in Iowa, valued at \$140.¹⁸ On July 4, 1918, the Lancaster Conference sewing circle made its first shipment, a total of 1,668 garments, to the AFSC.¹⁹ Many congregations made repeated shipments. From April 25, 1918, to December 22, 1919, the AFSC acknowledged six shipments from the Howard-Miami congregation of Kokomo, Ind., and from July 22, 1918, to January 1, 1920, it received eight shipments from the Zion sewing circle of Aurora, Ore.²⁰

The monetary value placed upon these gifts by the sewing circles represented only a small portion of the total contributions of the Mennonite Church to the French relief and reconstruction work. The annual reports of the MRCWS show cash contributions to the AFSC of \$122,000 for the first 16 months and \$44,297.82 for the 12 months ending April 30, 1920. Thus the total amount in cash and clothing contributed through the MRCWS to the AFSC during this 28-month period was \$189,769.14 assistance in men and money.²¹

By 1919 the Russian relief needs were making a strong appeal to the Mennonite church. For a number of years the Friends had been doing a little work in that country. Now, two years after the Bolshevik revolution, with the White and Red armies pushing each other hither and yon and with drought and famine taking a heavy toll, many sections of Russia were in desperate straits. This was especially true of the Ukraine in southern Russia. Since the Ukraine was the home of the Russian Mennonites, and many of the sufferers in that region were their own brethren, the American Mennonites felt a special responsibility resting upon them in this case. Church officials decided that the most feasible way to enter the Russian field would be through the AFSC, which was in the process of negotiating with an organization of American and Canadian Ukrainians, whereby the latter would turn over to the AFSC \$4 million worth of medical and general relief supplies then in storage in Bordeaux, France, and provide sufficient funds to finance a group of at least ten volunteers, including their transportation, equipment, and maintenance, if the AFSC would organize and administer the program.

The Quakers were anxious for Mennonite cooperation in this understanding, even ready to give them a major share in the work, although the work would probably need to be done in the name of the AFSC. As explained by Aaron Loucks in a published statement to the members of the MRCWS, it would be "a tremendous advantage" to proceed to Russia under the general administration of the Red

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Members of the American Friends Service Committee reconstruction unit in France roof a newly erected building.

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Debris fills the cathedral at Rheims in eastern France.

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Peace and Anabaptist Library, Sylvia Shirk Charles, pastor, 314 E. 19th St., New York, NY 10003. Phone: 212-673-7970. Fax: 212-673-7970. E-mail: pastor@manhattanmennonite.org. Website: www.manhattanmennonite.org.



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Website: www.ppquiltmuseum.com.

Pequea Bruderschaft Library, P.O. Box 25, Gordonville, PA 17529.

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Website: www.swissmennonite.org.

Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, Steve Shenk, executive
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Website: www.vbmhc.org.

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Western District Conference Historical Committee, Roger Juhnke,
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Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups,
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Website: www.etown.edu/youngctr.

Resources from Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee

to help preserve our heritage, interpret our faith stories and proclaim God's work among us

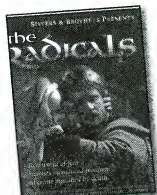
Heritage Celebrations: A Resource Book for Congregations by Wilma McKee

Packed with information and ideas, it encourages congregations planning events such as anniversaries to joyfully remember their heritage and gain a vision for future mission. **\$10.95**

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The Task of the Congregational Historian A 16-page pamphlet with tips for documenting and preserving a congregation's history. **\$2.00**



The Radicals DVD The major motion picture about Margaretha and Michael Sattler and Anabaptism's birth in sixteenth-century Europe. Includes commentary by Myron Augsburger, interviews with the film's producers and other extras. Also available in Spanish. **\$29.99 plus shipping and handling (\$25 per copy for multiple copies).**

Menno Simons commemorative fraktur A teaching tool as well as artwork, this four-color fraktur (a traditional German calligraphic art form) celebrates the 500th anniversary of the birth Menno Simons in 1596. Created by noted artist Roma J. Ruth, it features text from Menno's own words on Jesus as the Prince of Peace and incorporates in the border I Corinthians 3:11, Menno's favorite Scripture. **\$25.00 plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. Add 50¢ per additional copy.** Also available as note cards. **\$3 for four, \$6.50 for 10, \$9 for 15, \$11 for 20.**



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E-mail archives@goshen.edu. **Or order online:** www.MennoniteUSA.org/history.

*Camp Cody barracks,
Deming, New Mexico,
ca. 1918.*

Mennonite Church USA Archives-North
Newton



Malingers, Morons, and Morally Worthless

The Results of a Psychological Evaluation of World War I Conscientious Objectors

The World War I persecution of drafted Mennonites and other conscientious objectors has been well documented. By holding fast to their peace convictions, these COs were usually characterized as ignorant, irresponsible, intellectually weak, and mentally unbalanced. Refusing to combat the obvious threats to their country could hardly be the position of sensible people. That was the prevailing opinion of commanding officers, drill sergeants, fellow conscripts, and boards of inquiry (not to mention the general public). But they were not qualified to adequately make such assessments of those with whom they so dramatically disagreed. Surely someone with the proper training and credentials could determine that peace adherents were not stupid, crazy, and just plain lazy. Yet even an alleged expert could be grossly blinded by the fervor of the times, his professional obligations disintegrating into hyper-patriotic name-calling. That is disturbingly illustrated by the following reports from the psychologist at Camp Cody at Deming, New Mexico, submitted as evidence in the May 24, 1918, court-martial of Mennonite CO Gerhard J. Klippenstein.



Camp Cody, Deming, New Mexico

May 4, 1918

Report of Chief Psychological Examiner on examination of Conscientious Objectors

Of the entire group only one appeared reasonably sincere: this individual was either a skillful actor or an astute fanatic.

NAME	RACE	AGE	OCCUPATION	SCHOOLING	RELIGION
Leo, Ernest	German	24	Teacher	College 3	None
Waltner, Edward J.	German	28	Farmer	H.S. 2	Mennonite
Cover, Jesse J.	American	22	Farm laborer	Grades 8	Dunkard
Zehr, Christian	German	24	Farm laborer	H.S. 1	Mennonite
Rediger, Wm. James	German	22	Farm laborer	College 1	Pentecostal
Dirksen, Peter P.	German	24	Farm laborer	Grades 8	Mennonite
Mull, Edward H.	German	22	Farmer	Grades 8	Lutheran
Herman, John H.	American	25	Farmer	College 1	Church of God
Rosentrater, Wm. F.	German	23	Farmer	Grades 8	Nazarene
Klippenstein, Gerhard J.	German	31	Farmer	Grades 4	Mennonite
Salty, Gustave W.	Finn	25	Fisherman	Grades 8	None
Harder, John E.	German	25	Farmer	Grades 8	Mennonite
Wedel, Henry B.	German	30	Farmer	College 1	Mennonite
Dickson, Alexander R.	Scotch	29	Miner	Grades 8	None
Nelson, Lloyd E.	Swedish	24	Farmer	Grades 8	Adventist
Lorenz, Samuel J.	German	28	Farmer	H.S. 3	Mennonite
Peterson, Elmer A.	Danish	22	Farmer	College 1	Adventist
Elstun, George E.	German	28	Farmer	Grades 7	Dunkard
Danner, Fred A.	Russian	29	Farmer	Grades 8	Adventist
Toevs, John J.	German	26	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite
Blom, Bouke	Dutch	29	Farmer	Grades 6	Dunkard
Heppner, Peter	German	22	Farm laborer	Grades 7	Mennonite
Hiebert, Frank L.	German	26	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite
Bates, Julius A.	American	28	Farmer	Grades 8	Brethren
Graber, Charlie P.	Russian	22	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite
Witherbee, Glen H.	American	27	Farmer	Grades 6	Church of God
Schmidt, Jake J.	German	23	Farm laborer	Grades 7	Mennonite
Lemke, David	German	23	Farmer	Grades 4	Mennonite
Villiard, Paul	American	24	Farm laborer	Grades 4	Mennonite
Springer, Edward	German	22	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite
Buller, Peter	German	27	Farmer	Grades 5	Mennonite
Adrian, Peter I.	German	22	Farmer	Grades 5	Mennonite
Klassen, Frank	German	25	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite
Vlachos, Angelus Nick	Greek	23	Factory hand	?	Church of God

Reports from *Sourcebook: Oral History Interviews with World War One Conscientious Objectors*, 1986, pp. 215-219.

Camp Cody, Deming, New Mexico
May 4, 1918

Report of Chief Psychological Examiner on Examination of Conscientious Objectors.

Summary

1. The foregoing tables indicate clearly that the salient characteristics of the "Conscientious Objector" is (sic) not religion or conscience. Of the 34 individuals examined, 21 were of German parentage, of whom 10 gave presumptive evidence of German sympathy. The next largest group, 6 in number, was plainly actuated by physical cowardice their one motive was to escape service at all costs. A third group, 5 in number, characterized mainly by a weak sanctimoniousness, shows an utter lack of personal strength; though not distinctly cowards, they are morally worthless. The most obviously criminal group consisted of five unmistakable hypocrites whose "religion" was only a studied form of malingering. Nervous peculiarities, bordering on the pathological, appears (sic) in four cases. These are mentally defective to a degree that might warrant S.C.D. under A.R. 148 1/2. Of the entire group only one appeared reasonably sincere: this individual was either a skillful actor or an astute fanatic.

2. Discharge on account of feeble-mindedness is recommended for Peter L. Adrian, Paul Villiard, and Peter Buller.

3. The other 31 individuals are of no possible use to the Army but should be kept under military jurisdiction and dealt with in such manner as to impress upon the civil population the fact that religion and conscience cannot be prostituted as a means of escaping service. It is recommended that these 31 individuals be forced to unremitting hard labor for the period of the war, either in an internment camp, or in a penitentiary by sentence of a General Court-Martial.

Henry T. Moore
1st Lieut., Sanitary Corps,
Chief Psychological Examiner

OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS

Coward, personal weakness, socialist
German bias
Fanatic, apparently sincere
Weak personality, German bias, hypocrite
Cowardly, self-righteous, weak, little religion
Hypocrite, German sympathizer, clearly a malingerer
German bias
Abnormal nervous condition, maniacal fanatic
Coward, weak motives, German sympathy probable
Morbid mental condition, pathological heredity
Socialistic camouflage, neurotic malingerer
German sympathy probable, religion an after-thought
German sympathy, no religion
Coward, slave to physical fear
Cowardly, weak, religious sham, malingerer
Germanic, extremely nervous, malingerer
Weak, sanctimonious, "Too good to fight"
Pathological degenerate, malingerer
Worthless, weak
Stubborn malingerer
Insincere, feels no obligation to U.S.
Maligner
Silly obstinacy, no sense of honor or responsibility
Scared hypocrite, no religion
Germanic, nervously peculiar
Basest type of malingerer, a brazen [sic] hypocrite
Weak, illogical, obstinate, malingerer
German sympathy probable, hypocrite, no religion
Lor [sic] moron, simple malingerer
Extremely weak personality, malingerer
Deaf, no brains, F.M. [feeble-minded]
F.M., no religion
Illogical, weak malingerer
Hypocritical malingerer

Camp Cody buildings, Deming, New Mexico, ca. 1918.



Memorandum for the Division Surgeon, 34th Division:
Subject: The disposition of "Conscientious Objectors"

1. It is urgently recommended that the disposition of so-called conscientious objectors be such as to discourage as effectively as possible the prostitution of conscience and religion as a means of escaping service.
2. While there are some individual cases of apparent sincerity, it is the opinion of this office that the great majority are malingerers of the most insidious and shameless type.
3. There is every reason to believe that the press of the country is partly responsible for the large number of malingerers on religious grounds. Various statements to the effect that conscience would be respected absolutely have appeared with great frequency in the press; in like manner the names and locations of churches and societies whose creeds forbid participation in war or politics, or physical resistance of any sort, have been widely advertised by sensational feature-writers in the press.
4. Such sensational publications, by their "half-truth" character, have given rise to the idea that conscience was the "Open sesame" for the door to civil liberty and escape from military service. This idea, prevailing as it does in the masses of the civil population, stimulates malingering of this type all the more effectively because it acts so insidiously. If the problem is to be attacked at its source, the attitude of the civil population, especially as reflected in the press, must be changed.
5. This may be accomplished in part by giving deservedly severe punishment to the most shameless offenders and publishing the proceedings widely with appropriate emphasis upon the certainty that future offenders will be treated in the same manner.
6. The less consciously guilty, those who have been misled, those who are mentally or educationally not qualified to judge such matters in a responsible manner, should also be treated in such manner as to further the end aimed at in paragraph 5 above.
7. It is earnestly recommended that no person be discharged from the Army on account of so-called religious objections. If a so-called objector is feeble-minded and discharged under A.R. 148 1/2, it is urgently recommended that feeble-mindedness be stated as the cause of discharge.
8. No very definite precedent has so far been established as to the ultimate fate of these "objectors." It is an axion (sic) of free government that those who partake of its bounties are responsible individually and collectively for the maintenance of its capacity to afford them. This government can protect freedom of conscience only so long as its people are virile enough to enable the government to endure against the forces that would destroy it.

Certainly a man who denies this responsibility to his government and to the society which his government had enabled him to enjoy cannot be said to possess a conscience in any true sense of the word; and in the present emergency, the government can ill afford to acknowledge such men as other than deliberately disloyal and devoid of conscience. Their status differs so little from that of enemy aliens that this office strongly recommends the prompt establishment of a precedent of interning them with Germans, publicly stigmatizing them as disloyal, and forcing them to hard labor for the period of the war.

Henry T. Moore
1st Lieutenant, Sanitary Corps,
Chief Psychological Examiner

Commendable Medium


... continued from page 6

Cross, which has “exceptional facilities for transporting and securing supplies.” Since the AFSC was already established as a kind of subsidiary of the Red Cross, and since the latter did “not desire to establish any further connections of the kind they have already established with the Friends,” the best solution would seem to be to accept the invitation of the AFSC for cooperation with them.²² The formal invitation of the AFSC to the MRCWS executive committee included the following statement:

The AFSC feels that it would like very much to have the Mennonites take the larger share of the burden of this great work. We feel that you are much nearer akin to the Ukrainians than we are and that you are much better fitted on account of your language qualifications to be of service there. Moreover, we are very anxious to show you in some way that we desire to help you establish this as a relief agency so that you will have some recognition as such by the authorities as we have received during the war. The cause which is so dear to the hearts of all of us will be much better served if we have not one but many agencies so recognized. By the time the next war comes, therefore, you and we will be in far better position to be of real help. ... Negotiations are not yet completed with the Ukrainians, but we have every reason to believe that no further difficulties will be met unless the political situation in the Ukraine gets so acute that it will be impossible for the workers to get in at an early date. I think that we should plan, however, to proceed with this at once.²³

The MRCWS executive committee took action on January 13, 1920, accepting the offer of the AFSC for the opening of work in Russia, “subject to further investigation,” and plans were made for further negotiations “relative to the Ukrainian proposition” and to find the personnel for the proposed Russian unit. It was hoped that four men then in France and three from the United States would volunteer to join the unit. In those days, however, plans changed often and rapidly, as the secretary of the MRCWS explained later, and the AFSC was not successful in completing

its negotiations with the Ukrainian organization, hence this proposed plan for bringing relief to Russia in cooperation with the Friends did not materialize.²⁴

It was not long, however, until another way opened, as a series of events led to the foundation of Mennonite Central Committee as an independent Mennonite relief agency, with the opening of work in Russia as its first important project. 

Guy F. Hershberger (1925-1989) was one of the Mennonite Church's leading historians, ethicists, and proponents of peace and justice. This article is excerpted from an unpublished book-length manuscript on Mennonite relief, located in the Mennonite Church USA archive in Goshen, Ind. Hershberger is the subject of a forthcoming biography by Theron F. Schlabach.

Endnotes

- 1 R. L. Kelly to Vincent D. Nicholson, American Friends Service Committee files, 48:83.
- 2 *Gospel Herald* (January 10, 1918): 10:760.
- 3 Ibid. (December 13, 1917): 10:682-3.
- 4 Ibid. (January 24, 1918): 10:788. See also letter of V. C. Nicholson to G. L. Bender, May 27, 1918, “AFSC Papers,” file 44.
- 5 For the early history of the AFSC and its European programs, see Rufus M. Jones, *A Service of Love in Wartime: American Friends Relief Work in Europe, 1917-1919* (New York, 1920). See also letter of V.D. Nicholson to G. L. Bender, May 27, 1918, “AFSC Papers,” file 44.
- 6 Archives of the Mennonite Church: Minutes of the Relief Commission, “MRCWS Papers.”
- 7 Aaron Loucks, “Relief Commission for War Sufferers,” *Gospel Herald* (February 7, 1918): 10:820.
- 8 G. L. Bender to V. D. Nicholson in “AFSC Papers,” file 44.
- 9 “MRCWS Papers,” February 21, 1918.
- 10 V. D. Nicholson to G. L. Bender, “AFSC Papers,” file 44.
- 11 “AFSC Papers,” 48:89.
- 12 “AFSC Papers,” 48:301.
- 13 “AFSC Papers,” 48:85, 89.
- 14 “AFSC Papers” (Mennonites, Indiana, Pennsylvania).
- 15 Ibid. (November 25-18), 48:89.
- 16 Clara Eby Steiner, “The Sisters’ Share in the Mennonite Relief Service for War Sufferers,” *Gospel Herald* (March 21, 1918), 10:938, 939. Also letter to AFSC (February 9, 1918), “AFSC Papers” (Mennonites, Columbus Grove, Ohio).
- 17 *Gospel Herald* (March 7, 1918), 10:900.
- 18 Ibid. (June 6, 1918), 10:175.
- 19 Ibid. (August 1, 1918), 11:313.
- 20 “AFSC Papers,” Mennonites, Amboy, Indiana, and Aurora, Oregon.
- 21 “Proceedings of the Mennonite General Conference, Including Discussions Leading to Its Organization” (Scottsdale, Pa., 1921), 224.
- 22 *Gospel Herald* (January 22, 1920), 12:814-815.
- 23 “MRCWS Papers,” minutes, January 13, 1920.
- 24 *Gospel Herald* (January 22, 1920), 12:815. Levi Mumaw, “The Need of Maintaining a Relief Organization,” *Twenty-first Annual of the MBMC* (1927), 9.



An Overlooked Development in Peace

For Mennonites and other conscientious objectors, World War I generated harassment, arson, court-martials, torture, and even death. Those incidents are rightfully remembered as the costs of nonresistant discipleship. Yet another expression of faith from that era has not received the attention it deserves.

As World War I was winding down, responses were being formed to meet the needs of a battered, wounded world. For some Mennonites, not participating in the military wasn't enough; they sought to apply their convictions in a more proactive and constructive fashion. Several dozen Mennonites—mostly men but also a few women too—went to Europe and the Middle East to rebuild what the war had destroyed. And they went voluntarily, not as an alternative to military service. Indeed, many workers had already been drafted and experienced the trials of being conscientious objectors.

It was a pivotal occasion for U.S. Mennonites. They had a track record of assisting the victims of war, but that had been on a limited, localized level, such as when the American Revolution literally came into their backyards. Now, however, there was churchwide organizing and the unprecedented move of sending young people to work in far-off lands. Both their world and their notions of discipleship expanded dramatically. The results include the

creation of Mennonite Central Committee, Civilian Public Service, I-W, and the rest of the culture of service that has become a Mennonite hallmark.

Another result was more painful. Workers from the (Old) Mennonite Church soon found themselves more progressive than their church, which was struggling with issues of identity and relationship with the world. Some of those workers were eventually marginalized by the staunchly resistant traditionalism that held sway over the denomination for another quarter century.

Maybe that's the reason our World War I relief work has been largely ignored. Regardless, *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* gives recognition to those efforts, thanks to Guy F. Hershberger. Of the scant few treatments of the topic, he provides the most comprehensive. But that is only in an unpublished manuscript in the Mennonite Church USA archives in Goshen, Ind., from which this issue's cover story is excerpted.



As the United States continues to wage a senseless and unjustified war, Hershberger and the conscientious objectors of World War I still call us to a nonviolent, reconciling and restorative faith. May we have eyes to see and ears to listen. —Rich Preheim



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Book 'em, Menno

Essential history books, a Pulitzer Prize finalist,
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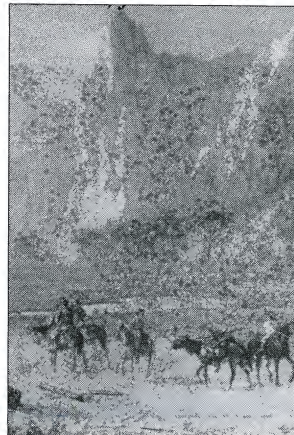
In this issue



Page 3: For the history-minded reader, there is no shortage of books to choose. How to pick which ones? The Essential Anabaptist/Mennonite History Reading List is a good place to start.



Page 8: The annual report of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee provides the organization's highlights for the past fiscal year.



Page 11: John D. Unruh, Jr., was a rising historical star when died 32 years ago at the age of 38. A friend and colleague recalls his legacy, including a much-acclaimed book.



Page 16: As we celebrate the books that have been published, it is also worth lamenting those that have not been written.

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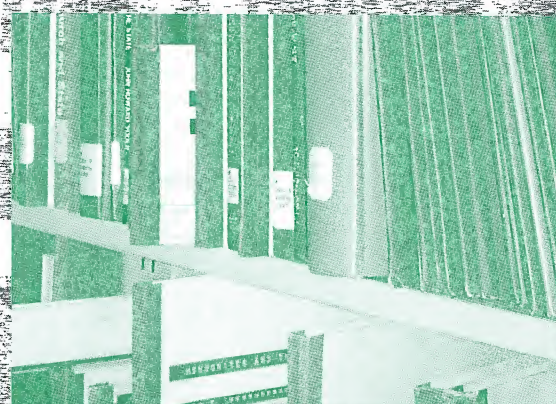


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Read 'em and reap

The books necessary for basic understandings of Anabaptist/Mennonite history

Henry David Thoreau once noted, “Without books, history is silent.” If he’s right—and who’s going to argue with Thoreau?—which books best give voice to the Anabaptist/Mennonite past? There certainly are no shortage of options, whose pages can provide illumination and insight on topics ranging from apparel to Zollikon (the first Anabaptist congregation). But selecting a title—or two or three or twenty or thirty—can be daunting, even intimidating. Where to start?

To begin to answer that question, *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* presents the Essential Anabaptist/Mennonite History Reading List, compiled with the invaluable assistance of some three dozen teachers, writers, librarians, and others knowledgeable in the field of the faith’s history. The list was designed to provide historical overviews of the broad scope and many facets of the church’s story over nearly five centuries, giving the basics on the Radical Reformation, denominational development, roles of women, global growth, and other important subjects. But let the reader beware. This is only a starting point. Each of these books can send you down a plethora of rabbit trails, where plenty more good and more specialized titles await.

The Essential Anabaptist/Mennonite History Reading List was developed especially for readers who are part of Mennonite Church USA. Except for a history of the Amish, no other book devoted

The Essential Anabaptist/Mennonite History Reading List was designed to provide historical overviews of the broad scope and many facts of the church's story over nearly five centuries.

exclusively to a particular denomination or group is on the list. The Amish are included because of the importance of understanding such a prominent body of believers—no one, after all, has made a TV show on “Horning Mennonites in the City”—and because they are, to a degree unlike any others, such a historically integral part Mennonite Church USA.

That's not to say the other groups aren't important. Indeed they are essential. But which ones are depends on your location. Mennonite Church USA members in Kansas, for instance, would do well to understand the histories of their many Mennonite Brethren neighbors. But there are no MBs in Ohio and Indiana, where Conservative Mennonite Conference history would be particularly relevant. Pennsylvanians, meanwhile, should learn about the large number of Brethren in Christ and the myriad of Old Order Mennonite fellowships in their region. Wonderful resources exist for such groups, but since they aren't germane across the denomination, they aren't listed here. Similarly, no regional, area conference, and congregational histories are mentioned. But whatever covers your locale are mandatory additions to your personalized reading list.

A number of other titles are conspicuous by their absence. The list focuses on historical books, not historic ones. So noted works such as John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* were not considered. Neither were sociological studies like *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA* by Conrad L. Kanagy and the almanac-like *Mennonite World USA* by

Donald B. Kraybill and C. Nelson Hostetter. All are vital to gaining a fuller understanding of the faith story, but they are not, strictly speaking, history books. You also won't find here any memoirs or autobiographies, like *A Way Was Opened* by Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, or source materials, such as *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, although obviously historical in nature.

Of course, examinations of our history don't show up just in books. *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, and *Mennonite Life* are among the periodicals that should be highlighted for regularly adding to our understandings. But again, they are beyond the scope of this list (which does not even include *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*).

As you start looking for the books on the Essential Anabaptist/Mennonite History Reading List, which are in alphabetical order, you will find that some are no longer in print, while others have gone through a number of editions and printings, sometimes by different publishers. That will be important if you want to acquire a title for your personal or congregational library. But all should be available on library shelves or interlibrary loan. The year listed in each entry is when the book was first published.

As the lazy days of summer approach, the Essential Anabaptist/Mennonite History Reading List should provide plenty of reading material for when you're lounging by the pool or swaying in the hammock. So read 'em and reap. ☞



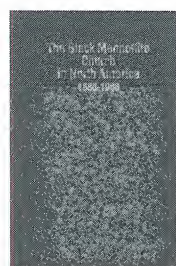
The Essential Anabaptist/Mennonite History Reading List

The Anabaptist Vision by Harold S. Bender (1944)



At just 44 pages, it's really more of a booklet than a book. But *The Anabaptist Vision* packs a lot into a small volume. In fact, it is easily one of the seminal Mennonite works, maybe the seminal work, of the past 100 years because, in the words of one scholar, it "forged Mennonites into a community of memory

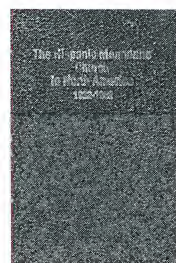
rooted in the 16th century, a community with strong religious impulses embodied in nonviolent service, devout discipleship, and primary identity with the people of God, the church." One can argue with *The Anabaptist Vision* at a number of points, but its influence is indisputable—and still relevant.



Black Mennonite Church in North America, 1886-1986 by LeRoy Bechler (1986)

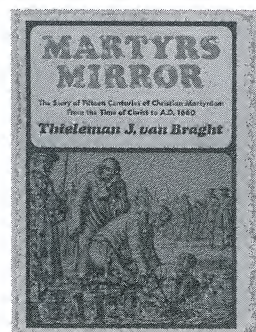
Hispanic Mennonite Church in North America, 1932-1982 by Rafael Falcón (1986)

Achieving the goal of being an antiracist church demands much vigilance and awareness, including understanding the stories of Mennonites of color, who provide so much salt and light to a church long dominated by whites. The best introductions to them are the companion pieces *Black Mennonite Church in North America* and *Hispanic Mennonite Church in North America*. For white Mennonites seeking to combat prejudice and discrimination, they must begin to know those on the other side of the racial divide.

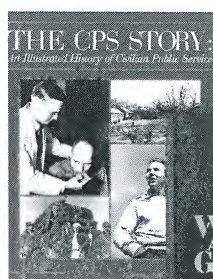


The Bloody Theatre, or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians ... by Thieleman J. van Braght (1660)

One measure of the impact of a book (or virtually anything else, for that matter) is its longevity. Three and a half centuries and 20 printings since it first appeared, the tome commonly called *Martyrs Mirror* still holds a hallowed place in Mennonite historiography. Thielman van Braght's compilation of accounts



of those who died for their faith continues to challenge those who read it, no matter the era, to pursue obedience and righteousness. That's what any good history should do.

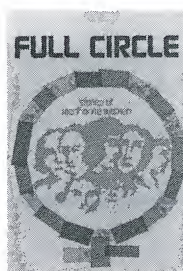


The CPS Story: An Illustrated History of Civilian Public Service by Albert N. Keim (1990)

Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947 by Rachel Waltner Goossen (1997)

Nothing shaped

contemporary Mennonitism like Civilian Public Service, the World War II alternative to compulsory military duty that sparked new understandings and a decades-long vibrancy of faith. In just 128 readable and nicely illustrated pages, *The CPS Story* provides an overview to how and why the program developed, its work of "national importance," and the men who carried it out. But women also played a significant role in the CPS story. The groundbreaking *Women Against the Good War* highlights their service in CPS camps and mental hospitals, effects on family life, and interactions with a frequently hostile world.

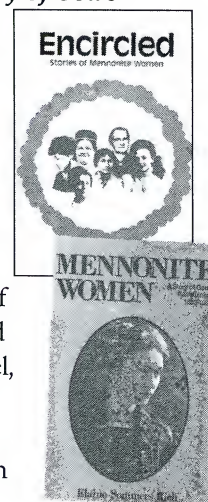


Full Circle: Stories of Mennonite Women, edited by Mary Lou Cummings (1978)

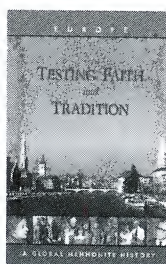
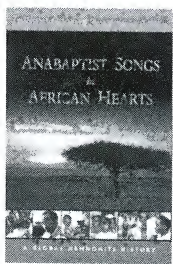
Encircled: Stories of Mennonite Women, edited by Ruth Unrau (1986)

Mennonite Women: A Story of God's Faithfulness, 1683-1983 by Elaine Sommers Rich (1983)

Before the relatively recent growth in Mennonite and Amish women's studies, three books shined a light on what had been a long neglected part of the faith story. *Mennonite Women* is devoted to women in the Mennonite Church, including a history of the denomination's Women's Missionary and Service Commission. *Full Circle* and its sequel, *Encircled*, are more focused on the General Conference Mennonite Church but also include stories of women from beyond North



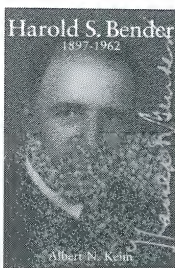
America. Together, these three titles provide wide-ranging exposure to women's lives in service to God.



"Global Mennonite History Series"

***Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts* by Alemu Checole, Samuel Asefa, Bekithemba Dube, Doris Dube, Michael Kodzo Badasu, Erik Kumedisa, Barbara Nkala, I. U. Nsasak, Siaka Traore, and Pakis Tschmikia (2003)**
***Testing Faith and Tradition* by Claude Baecher, Neal Blough, James Jakob Fehr, Alle G. Hoekema, Hanspeter Jecker, John N. Klassen, Diether Gotz Lichdi, Ed van Straten, Annelies Verbeek (2006)**

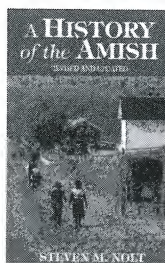
As the Mennonite churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America continue to mushroom, it is imperative that the white Westerners in the faith's traditional homelands learn about their sisters and brothers who are eclipsing them in numbers and vitality. That's why in 1997 Mennonite World Conference launched the "Global Mennonite History Series" project, with one volume on each of the five continents. Already out are books on the church in Europe and Africa, while Asia and the Pacific region, Latin America, and North America are in process and should be completed in the next couple of years.



***Harold S. Bender* by Albert N. Keim (1998)**

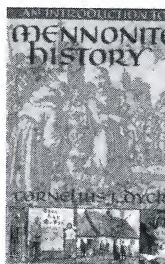
While Mennonite life and belief is a corporate enterprise, the influence of individuals cannot be denied, particularly in the last century and a half. Using their God-given talents at crucial times, they spurred new and renewed faithfulness throughout the church. Unfortunately,

there is a lack of respected biographical accounts of such people and their service. One notable exception, however, is *Harold S. Bender*. Nicknamed "The Pope" for the power he wielded, Bender affected much of the 20th-century church, from Goshen College and Mennonite World Conference to peace advocacy and his landmark "The Anabaptist Vision" address. As a result, *Harold S. Bender* is as much about a pivotal era in North American Mennonitism as it is about a single man.



***A History of the Amish* by Steven M. Nolt (1992)**

Mennonites are always being confused with Amish. Even the former often think they broke away from the latter, when the reverse is actually true. Nolt has provided the first comprehensive historical survey of the Amish church, starting with the Radical Reformation and the Jakob Ammann-led split from the Mennonite fellowship in the late 17th century, then covering the migrations to America, the disappearance of the European Amish, and the church's interactions with the contemporary world. Along the way the reader gains corrective insights and debunked stereotypes. That is important to know, particularly as Amish distinctives and peculiarities have given them increased visibility in America and around the world.



***An Introduction to Mennonite History* by Cornelius J. Dyck (1967)**

The title says it all. *An Introduction to Mennonite History* remains the best, although not only, historical overview of Mennonitism, from its revolutionary European origins to its American incarnations to its worldwide growth. Particularly valuable for Mennonite Church USA readers is its concise examinations of other bodies, such as the Mennonite Brethren, Hutterites, and colony groups.

The Mennonite Encyclopedia

Volume I, A-C, Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith, editors; Cornelius Krahn, associate editor; Melvin Gingerich, managing editor (1955)

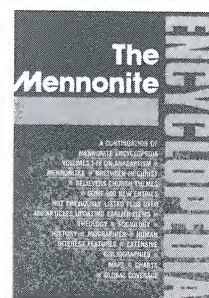
Volume II, D-H, Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith, editors; Cornelius Krahn, associate editor; Melvin Gingerich, managing editor (1956)

Volume III, I-N, Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith, editors; Cornelius Krahn, associate editor; Melvin Gingerich, managing editor (1957)

Volume IV, O-Z, Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith, editors; Cornelius Krahn, associate editor; Melvin Gingerich, managing editor (1959)

Volume V, A-Z, Cornelius J. Dyck and Dennis D. Martin, editors (1990)

When *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* came out in the 1950s, one reviewer declared it "the starting point for all research" in Anabaptist and Mennonite studies. Half a century later, the



five-volume encyclopedia is still a required resource. Nothing else so concisely and so easily provides so much information, from the biographical to the theological. Originally a four-volume set, a one-volume supplement was published in 1990. Today the entire encyclopedia is in the process of being put on the web (www.gameo.org), complete with new and updated articles.

“The Mennonite Experience in America” series

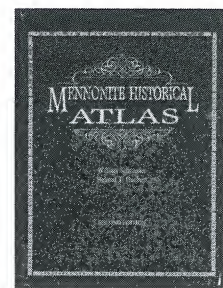
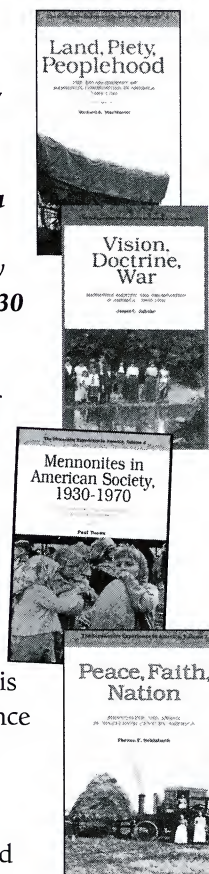
***Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1683-1790* by Richard K. MacMaster (1985)**

***Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth-Century America* by Theron F. Schlabach (1988)**

***Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930* by James C. Juhnke (1989)**

***Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970: Modernity and the Persistence of Religious Community* by Paul Toews (1996)**

The history of Mennonites in the United States is hardly monolithic but rather an intricate weaving of many cultural, ethnic, and religious groups that, despite their differences, claim the same faith. That richness and complexity is best reflected in “The Mennonite Experience in America,” a monumental series of four books that, with integrity of scholarship and ease of readability, puts together the myriad pieces of the story since Amish and Mennonites started coming to the New World in the 17th century.

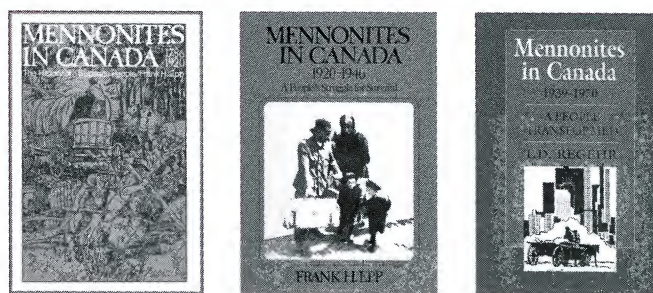


***Mennonite Historical Atlas* by Helmut T. Huebert and William Schroeder (1990)**

From the beginning of Anabaptism, adherents of the faith have often not stayed long in one place but been repeatedly forced or encouraged by circumstance to seek new homes. And each stop on those journeys, which

were often intercontinental in scope, played a vital role in the development of a people. That's why *Mennonite Historical Atlas*, with its 128 maps from Europe, Russia, and

North and Latin America, is an essential reference source. Since Mennonites have long been a people on the go, it is necessary to know where they have been.



“Mennonites in Canada” series

***Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People* by Frank H. Epp (1974)**

***Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940: A People's Struggle for Survival* by Frank H. Epp (1982)**

***Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* by T. D. Regehr (1996)**

While the emergence of current denominational realities might suggest otherwise, it is to the peril of U.S. Mennonites to disregard or downplay the significance of understanding our northern sisters and brothers. After all, their history is in many ways our history, so much so that, for North American church members, the U.S.-Canada border was almost nonexistent until the final days of the 20th century. The three-volume “Mennonites in Canada” series reminds U.S. Mennonites of that, while also providing glimpses into why we have gone our separate structural ways.

***Mennonites in Russia, 1798-1988: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*, edited by John Friesen (1989)**

The Russian Mennonite experience is unquestionably one of the church's greatest dramas. Yet only one book covers it from its beginnings until shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union. But *Mennonites in Russia*, written to celebrate Russian immigrant and longtime Canadian Mennonite historian Gerhard Lohrenz, is not a typical historical survey. Rather it's a collection of 14 essays on topics such as the migration at the invitation of Catherine the Great and Soviet Mennonite identity. Other books may address various episodes before *glasnost* and *perestroika*, many of them splendidly, but only *Mennonites in Russia* deals with them all.



Continued on page 10 ...



2007-08 annual report

The 2007-08 fiscal year was one of significant developments for the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee. After remaining vacant for two and a half years, the position of director was filled in September when Rich Preheim, who had been serving as part-time interim director, assumed the role. Then five months later, the Historical Committee ended the fiscal year on January 31 with income exceeding expenses by a remarkable \$12,000. For that we give thanks for God's graciousness and the generosity of God's people.

The Historical Committee exceeded budget goals for both contributions and income from subscriptions to *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. We are gratified and humbled by these voluntary expressions of support. It is good to know that our efforts are valued and appreciated, and that is a trust we will continue to honor. Overall, the committee came within \$1,200 of its target income of \$240,788 for FYE 2008. At the same, time expenses were about \$13,000 below budget, in large part due to not having to pay for a full-time director for most of the year.

With permanent leadership in place and a solid financial base, the committee is well set to face the future as it seeks to raise the church's consciousness of the past. One critical issue needing attention remains the lack of space for our archives in both Goshen, Ind., and North Newton, Kan. In the past year, in fact, the North Newton archive, located at Bethel College, has had to begin renting space to store some materials off-site because of the lack of space on campus. At Goshen, only half of our archival materials are in the archival building. The rest are in a former dormitory on the Goshen College campus.

We are, however, actively exploring solutions to the space problem. Two possible options are now before the Historical Committee. The proposed new denominational office in Elkhart could include enough space for all our Goshen collections. Meanwhile, Goshen

College is investigating the feasibility of remodeling the campus building that includes the Historical Committee office and archive. Both of these ideas will be clarified in the upcoming months, with a decision expected this summer.

Not unrelated to the question of facilities is a recently started discussion regarding the Historical Committee's relationship with and service to the church. The committee is currently part of Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership, which oversees the work of the entire denomination. Both the Historical Committee and Executive Leadership have expressed their desire for the committee and its work to remain under Executive Leadership purview. But needing to be explored is how in that situation the Historical Committee can best fulfill its mission of preserving our heritage, interpreting our faith stories, and proclaiming God's work among us.

But amid all these prospects for change have remained the constants of our work. Among them, both the Goshen and North Newton archives continue their efforts to scan their collections, making digital versions of documents and photographs available on their websites. The two archives also responded to a total of about 2,000 research requests during the year.

In the Historical Committee's annual John Horsch Mennonite Historical Essay Contest, the winners were Tobin Miller Shearer in the graduate school/seminary division and Braden Hiebner in the undergraduate division. Shearer, a doctoral student at Northwest University, Evanston, Ill., wrote, "Looking Past Legality: Interracial Marriage and the Mennonite Church, 1930-1971." Hiebner, from Bethel College, submitted "Reintegrating the Life of Wilhelm Mannhardt: A 19th-Century Mennonite, Mythologist, Nationalist, Pietist, and Liberal." Excerpts from both were published in the October issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. ✍

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 Wayne Sutter
 Willis & Esther Sutter
 J. Dennis Swartz
 H. D. Swartzendruber
 Steven J. Taylor
 John D. Thiesen
 Carl & Louise Thieszen
 James L. Troyer
 Leroy & Phyllis Troyer
 George S. & Dorothy Unger
 Marilyn & Melvin Voran
 James & Lenore Waltner
 Sharon Waltner
 Vern & Judy Warkentin
 James O. Weaver
 Wayne H. Wengerd
 Helen & J. G. Widmer
 Roy Williams
 Lamont Woelk
 Carl & Martha Yoder
 Carl & Phyllis Yoder
 Esther Yoder
 Galen & Esther Yoder
 Harvey L. Yoder
 Lawrence & Shirlee Yoder
 Luke & Cora Yoder
 Marvin & Neta Faye Yoder
 Orville & LaJane Yoder
 Paton Yoder
 Thomas K. Yoder
 Virgil E. & Rita H. Yoder
 Zelda Yoder
 Laverne Yousey
 Oliver & Miriam Yutzy
 Lloyd Zeager
 Floyd & Pearl Zehr
 John W. Zimmerly

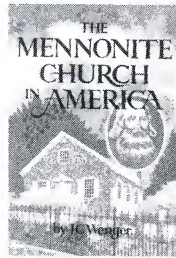
Reading List ... cont. from page 7



Open Doors: The History of the General Conference Mennonite Church by S. F. Pannabecker (1975)

The Mennonite Church in America: Sometimes Called the Old Mennonites by J. C. Wenger (1966)

Some four decades ago, a member of the General Conference Mennonite Church reviewed a new history of the Mennonite Church and wrote, "Mennonites owe it to each other today to take simple steps to get to know each other better—steps like reading a book about the other." That is more important now than ever since the two denominations have merged into one that is still haunted by misconceptions and stereotypes about the other. *Open Doors* and *The Mennonite Church in America* remain the standard historical works on the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church respectively and so are worth reading in order to better grasp some of the dynamics of Mennonite Church USA.

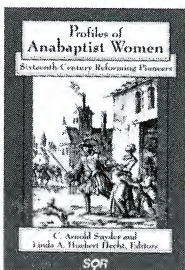


Williams' book remains a classic and requisite resource on those chaotic and invigorating times that spawned Anabaptism, and not just because it introduced the phrase "Radical Reformation."



Stories: How Mennonites Came to Be by John D. Roth (2006)

The most recent book on this list (along with the Europe volume of the "Mennonite Global History Series"), *Stories* gives a brief and eminently readable overview of the church's history. But it also explicitly emphasizes why that history matters: Our past has shaped our present and is directing our future. *Stories* does not shy away from the conflicts and controversies that, as regrettable as they may be, are as formative as the positive accounts we like to remember and proclaim.



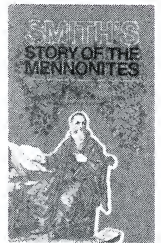
Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers, C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert Hecht, editors (1996)

Despite conventional wisdom to the contrary, Anabaptism's development and growth wasn't due to just Conrad Grebel, Felix Mantz, Michael Sattler, and

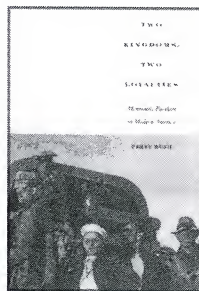
other famous men. After being overlooked for centuries, the female influence on the Radical Reformation is raised to much-needed prominence in *Profiles of Anabaptist Women*. The patriarchal constraints of 16th-century Europe didn't stop many women from teaching, evangelizing, writing, publishing, charity work, and other efforts—and all while facing persecution just like the men. *Profiles of Anabaptist Women* is impressive research and a vital step toward historiographic gender balance.

The Story of the Mennonites by C. Henry Smith (1941)

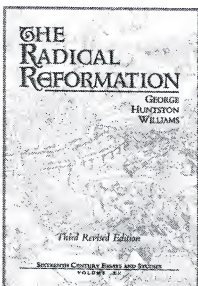
C. Henry Smith's *The Story of the Mennonites* is not only a history book but also a historical one. Expanding on a book written more than 20 years earlier, *The Story of the Mennonites* was the first scholarly general American Mennonite history in the English language. It has gone through five editions, most recently in 1981 when it came out as *Smith's Story of the Mennonites*, revised and edited by Cornelius Krahn. Considered a classic, it is still used in college courses on Mennonite history.



Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America by Perry Bush (1998)



Since the Mennonites are a historic peace church, a peace history is mandatory. *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties* adeptly covers the church's pacifism from World War I through the Vietnam War. Until the 20th century, Mennonites had largely been able to maintain their nonresistance by avoiding the ugliness and complexities of war and the powers that waged them. That was the domain of "worldly" people. But World War I changed that, making unprecedented demands of conscientious objectors, thus charting a course for new Mennonite ways of engaging the state in order to remain true to the precepts of the faith.



The Radical Reformation by George Huntston Williams (1962)

The response was enthusiastic 45 years ago when *The Radical Reformation* came out. Reviewers called it a "milestone," a "landmark in the field of Anabaptist and related history," and a "magnificent and penetrating analysis." George Huntston

John D. Unruh, Jr.

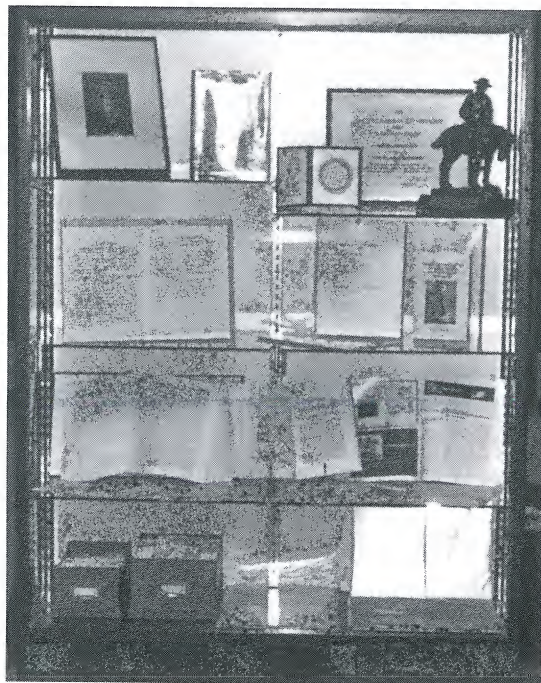
1937-1976

John D. Unruh, Jr., wrote just one book during his academic career. That's because it was a brief career and a brief life, ending in 1976 at the age of 38 due to brain cancer after barely eight years of teaching history at Bluffton (Ohio) College (now University). But the book he produced was an accomplishment inversely proportional to the length of his life. When it came out three years after his death, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* was immediately celebrated. *Christian Science Monitor* called it "a major contribution to American historiography," while *Publisher's Weekly* declared it "the finest piece of Western history in a generation." *Western Historical Quarterly* said it was "a milestone in western historical scholarship." *The Plains Across* received seven awards, including the crowning accolade of being named a finalist for the 1980 Pulitzer Prize in history.



Bluffton University Archives

A native of Freeman, S.D., Unruh followed in the footsteps of his father, a respected historian in his own right. John D. Unruh, Sr., was also a college professor and administrator who wrote *In the Name of Christ*, the 1952 history of Mennonite Central Committee. His son graduated from Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., and then served with MCC before earning his master's and doctoral degrees in history from the University of Kansas. He went to Bluffton in 1967 and soon became a popular and respected faculty member. So much so that a course on African-American history that he team-taught was attended by members of the Black Panthers.



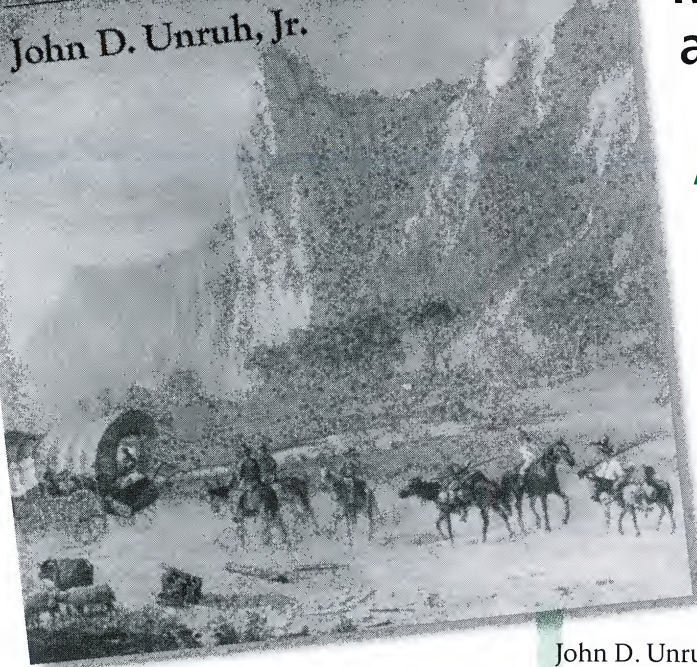
Following Unruh's death, an on-campus memorial of some of his papers and artifacts was created. Bluffton University Archives

Unruh would have turned 70 last year. Later this year a collection of his papers will be deposited at the Bluffton archives. Among the project's organizers is Von Hardesty, a former history faculty colleague of Unruh's. Following is an excerpt from a longer essay from Hardesty about Unruh, including the publication of *The Plains Across*.

The Plains Across

The Overland Emigrants and
the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60

John D. Unruh, Jr.



The editor of The Plains Across called Unruh's manuscript "perfect in every way: exhaustive research, exciting, innovative scholarship, flawless style, impeccable typescript." The book went on to be a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in history.

Bluffton University Archives

Remembering John D. Unruh, Jr., and *The Plains Across*

A Young Historian's Legacy

by Von Hardesty

As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children. —Psalm 103:15-17 (NKJV)

John D. Unruh, Jr., came to Bluffton College as a full-time member of the history department in 1967. His tenure proved to be all too brief, ending abruptly with his death in January 1976, a victim of brain cancer at the age of 38. Prior to his death, the name John Unruh was often mentioned as a bright light in a new generation of historians in Mennonite higher education. The Bluffton community indeed took pride in the fact that John had taken up residence in their midst. He brought a matchless enthusiasm for both teaching and scholarship. And, for a modest salary, John was willing to accept a formidable teaching load and myriad faculty committee assignments, even as he worked tirelessly on his dissertation. John and his wife, Ellie, built a new home in a stand of woods on the edge of the city, a move that suggested their tenure at Bluffton might indeed be long-term.

Faculty colleagues knew him as a talented teacher and creative leader in the daunting task of curriculum. The student body, especially those willing to wrestle with the rigors of "a John Unruh course," encountered an inspiring lecturer and mentor. For history majors in research seminars, John was a gentle taskmaster, insisting on exacting standards and encouraging optimal performance with friendly persuasion rather than intimidation. The student emerged from the ordeal with sharpened skills and an enhanced sense of academic purpose. John's personal ideals, most notably his peace witness, reflected his Anabaptist upbringing in South Dakota. He often spoke in campus convocations, which allowed a wider group of students to observe firsthand his enthusiasm for history and his grasp of current affairs. He was a great storyteller.

On a cold winter day in January 1976, news reached Bluffton from a Toledo hospital that John had not survived an operation to remove a cancerous brain tumor. The sudden revelation of his death descended on the campus as a thunderclap. Few, in fact, had known of his health crisis or the surgery that followed. Echoing the psalmist, one could say that John Unruh's years at Bluffton had been as a "flower in the field."

In the aftermath of his passing, words were difficult to muster to express the profound sense of loss that enveloped the Bluffton community. The college held a memorial service on Tuesday, January 20, at First Mennonite Church in Bluffton. Rev. Walter Gering presided over the service, which included a meditation by former Bluffton president Lloyd L. Ramseyer and brief remarks from Unruh's close friend Elmer Neufeld, then the dean of academic affairs, and by me. The service offered everyone a formal, if painful, setting to celebrate John's life. He was buried in the cemetery of his home congregation, Salem Mennonite Church, near Freeman, S.D.



John once told me that his goal was to write his dissertation in such a way that he could simultaneously submit it to his graduate adviser and to a potential publisher. This was a most ambitious undertaking, to say the least. In the 1970s, most graduate students found themselves at work on narrow dissertation topics, a manifestation of the increasing specialization that had enveloped our discipline in that decade. "Big picture" histories were routinely avoided, except by the most senior and established historians. But here was the youthful John Unruh, preparing to write a magisterial and myth-shattering account of the overland migrations, arguably a key episode in shaping the course of American history. Talent, ambition, and opportunity powerfully merged in John's outstanding dissertation study.

Ellie Unruh played no small role in bringing the ten-year project to fruition, offering personal support and even accompanying John as a research assistant to the Yale University

archives. Her critical role, in the end, came with the daunting task of typing the dissertation into a pristine manuscript. To this end, Ellie and John employed the college's new IBM typewriter/printer with magnetic tapes to type and print the final version. I remember visiting them one evening as they worked. John took great delight in showing me how the sophisticated IBM worked. One should add that their use of the IBM was done with great integrity, at no cost to the college: They were most scrupulous about buying their own tapes and paper. In late 1975, John mailed two copies of his weighty manuscript of 880 pages: one to Clifford Griffin, his graduate adviser at the University of Kansas, and the other to the University of Illinois Press.

A sad aspect of this story is that the dissertation was mailed just as John faced the onset of disturbing symptoms of a fatal disease. It is important to remember that the whole crisis unfolded in a remarkably short time frame. Just three weeks after mailing the final version of his manuscript to his adviser and to his publisher, John entered the Toledo hospital in mid-January, with the operation taking place on January 16, 1976. He died two days later, on January 18, and the memorial service followed on January 20. The breathless pace of these melancholy events left Bluffton in a state of shock and sorrow.

For John and Ellie, the fast-moving crisis afforded little time to make peace with the reality of a life-threatening disease and to deal with all the critical decisions that had to be made. I can only imagine the depths of their agony and the enormous courage it took to face the crisis. I was not privy to this painful drama, but I am aware that the Unruhs decided to alert a small circle of friends and family in advance. In the course of events, I found myself invited into that circle on the eve of John's operation. John called me on a Sunday afternoon, asking cryptically if he could stop by my house and chat with me that very day. The precise date is now uncertain in my mind. His purpose had been unstated on the phone, but there had been an unmistakable sense of urgency in his voice. When he arrived that evening, alone, we sat down in my living room. His first words have faded from memory—there may have been some pleasantries exchanged—but I remember

Talent, ambition, and opportunity powerfully merged in John's outstanding dissertation study.



Unruh was a popular and inspiring lecturer who often spoke in campus convocations. Among the students in an African-American history course that he team-taught were members of the Black Panthers.

Bluffton University Archives

John quickly describing his condition and the need for an operation in the near term to remove a tumor from his brain. He told me that the first symptoms of the disease were evident in his motor skills: the sudden and inexplicable loss of his rapid typing ability. (He once told me he could type an average of 125-130 words a minute.) This alarming loss of coordination had sparked him to undergo medical tests. Only then was the brain tumor discovered. John told me all these things with a calm demeanor. When I asked about the prognosis for recovery, he explained that such tumors were not all alike and there was one type that was amenable to surgery. Yet, he warned, the risks were high that he would not survive the disease.

John then changed the subject, saying that he had a huge favor to ask me. In the case of death, he asked, would I assist Ellie in shepherding his dissertation into publication? He told me of the status of the manuscript, that it was in the hands of an editor at the University of Illinois Press. Since I had read portions of his manuscript, he felt I was highly qualified to oversee this final and critical stage of the process. There were no specific instructions, just the appeal to watch over this project that had been a part of his life for a decade. I was humbled by his request, even a bit intimidated, but I quickly agreed to work with Ellie to assure that all editorial requests from Illinois were met promptly. Still stunned by the news of his upcoming operation, I offered in that fleeting conversation as much encouragement as I could muster. I sensed that John was putting his life in order, and he had asked me to assist him.

In the days that followed, we remained in contact, and the context for our conversations, if altered, remained warm and engaging. As January unfolded, news reached the campus at large that John had been hospitalized in Toledo. Many were in contact with John at that point. My last conversation with John took place on Friday, January 16, when I drove up to see him in the hospital on the day of his surgery. We had a long interlude of time alone. He was in good spirits, and we had a chance to talk about his book, shared teaching experiences, and the important things in life. It was a special encounter, the last time for us to express deeply felt thoughts and feelings. In two short days, my colleague and friend passed away, never recovering from his surgery. All who met John in that critical time were impressed with his personal courage, sense of purpose, and caring for others.



After the passing of time, Ellie and I renewed our contact with the University of Illinois Press. We worked with managing editor Elizabeth Dulany to assure that the manuscript, called *The Plains Across*, was on track. In one letter to Dulany, I expressed the pivotal concern that the “narrative remain intact” and that the “scholarly apparatus that accompanies the text be preserved.” I was fully aware that editors were

often tempted to make radical, even whimsical, changes to a manuscript, and I wished to spare John's extraordinary book from such a fate. As I assisted in the search for potential illustrations, I was anxious to see what Illinois had planned for John's opus.

My fears concerning the editorial process at Illinois proved to be unfounded. I soon learned of the editors' high regard for John's manuscript. In one letter from Dulany, designed "to allay any possible apprehensions," she told us that she did not "cut out, reorganize, rewrite, or in any substantive way alter any part of Mr. Unruh's work." What changes they did propose were largely cosmetic, for example, the transformation of chapter 1 into an introduction and the combination of chapters 2 and 3 into the new chapter 1. Otherwise, the manuscript was unaltered, except for a simplified format for the numerous footnotes. Ellie and I were now reassured that John's manuscript would pass through the gauntlet of editorial review essentially unscathed. Later that spring we read the galleys for the new book with great delight.

That same letter from Dulany carried a most unusual endorsement of John's scholarship and writing skill. She concluded: "In my 22 years in this business I don't think I have ever had the pleasure of working on such a perfect manuscript, perfect in every way: exhaustive research, exciting, innovative scholarship, flawless style, impeccable typescript (Mrs. Unruh's I note). As a matter of fact, since I couldn't bring myself to put a red pencil to the original manuscript but worked from a Xerox, the original is preserved intact and will be sent back to you eventually."

The book reviews for *The Plains Across* after it came out in 1979 echoed the enthusiasm of the editors at Illinois. Ray Allen Billington, then the leading historian of the American West, wrote in a *Washington Post* book review that *The Plains Across* was the "best book yet written on the overland migrations." Moreover, he noted, the myths of the overland migrations, many fashioned by historian Francis Parkman and Hollywood movies, fall "like dominoes" in the book. Billington noted as well John's "innovative scholarship" and his engaging narrative, "rich in anecdotes and informative vignettes." Taking

note that John had died prior to the appearance of *The Plains Across*, Billington concluded John could not have erected "a finer or more enduring monument to himself."

We who knew John are haunted by the fact that *The Plains Across*, by circumstance, became an epitaph rather than the harbinger for what surely would have been a brilliant career. One can only speculate on what historical projects John would have pursued in the decades of the 1980s and the 1990s. I often muse about how John would have reacted to the changing world after 1976. How would this devotee of Bluffton's then state-of-the-art IBM typewriter/printer have reacted to the marvels of the computer age? How would he have made use of the Internet in his approach to research? As a person deeply interested in political affairs, how would he have reacted to the turbulent events of recent times? Also, the thought crosses my mind that more than one institution of higher learning might have sought him out for their history program. On a personal level, I am sure John, the University of Kansas graduate, would have followed with great interest the recent successes of the Jayhawks' stellar football and basketball teams. Such musings only add to one's sense of loss at the mention of John Unruh's name.

Yet we should be attentive to another dimension of his career: his influence on a host of students. This may be the most enduring measure of his legacy. How many students were inspired by John's love of history? Some went on to graduate work in history, including George Rable, an award-winning Civil War historian at the University of Alabama. But he is not alone. Whatever their numbers or disciplines, these students of John Unruh offer a living legacy to a remarkable and worthy life. ✧

A 1961 graduate of Bluffton College, Von Hardesty returned to his alma mater to teach history during the 1966-67 academic year and again from 1970 to 1978. The next year he joined the staff of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., where he is currently a curator at its National Air and Space Museum.

Billington concluded John could not have erected "a finer or more enduring monument to himself."



Chester A. Arthur, John F. Funk, and Mennonite historiography

By virtually all accounts, Chester A. Arthur was one of the United States' most forgettable presidents. Elected as vice president, he moved into the White House in 1881, when James A. Garfield died from an assassin's bullet just six months following inauguration. After finishing Garfield's term, Arthur died the next year and slipped into historical obscurity, better known for his beefy mustache and sideburns than for any political legacy. Nevertheless, according to the Library of Congress online catalog, he has been the subject of some 30 books.

At the same time as Arthur's administration, John F. Funk was almost single-handedly leading the church through an era of profound revitalization. For example, consider all the aspects of the church today that bear his imprint: Mennonite Mission Network, Goshen College, MAX insurance and mutual aid, *The Mennonite*, Mennonite Publishing Network, and Indiana-Michigan Conference are among those that trace their lineage back to Funk-inspired initiatives.

Yet while the undistinguished Arthur has been relatively well documented by dozens of authors and historians, Funk has been the subject of exactly one book: a 1964 biography written by four grandchildren. The mists of time are threatening to shroud perhaps the most influential Mennonite the church has ever seen.

As this issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* celebrates volumes that have been published, it is also worth lamenting those not written. Our bookshelves, and thus our historical consciousness, are diminished by their absence.

Funk is not the only subject deserving credible research and writing. Mennonite Central Committee is one of our most remarkable stories. Yet no one has tackled a historical survey of this ministry since 1952. Much, obviously, has happened since then. There is no biography of James Lark, the first African-American to be ordained in the Mennonite Church, and his wife, Rowena, who were pioneers in urban ministry and helped pave the way for a multicultural, multiethnic church. The Christian Krehbiel family, including his sons C. E. and H. P., had a huge impact on the General Conference Mennonite Church from its beginning, but their story has not been written either. And the list could go on and on.

It is important to note that these subjects have not been totally ignored, many having been addressed in academic papers and scholarly journal articles. But it is books (or whatever the medium's next generation will be) that are the most accessible to the general population.

There are legitimate and understandable reasons why these have not been written. At the top of the list, no doubt, is money. Quite simply, somebody needs to financially support an author to research and write. It's admittedly not an easy issue to address. But it must be addressed, because if we don't find ways to pay for such projects now, we will surely pay later with the loss of our historical understanding.

—Rich Preheim



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www.MennoniteUSA.org/history

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The case for conflict

Why the church's disagreements, fights
and schisms cannot be historically ignored

Grant received for film preservation



William Zehr

The Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee has been awarded an \$8,100 grant to preserve the first movie on a Mennonite theme by pioneer Mennonite filmmaker William Zehr. The grant, from the National Film Preservation Foundation, will be used to preserve the current film and to make digital copies of *The Call of the Cheyenne*, about Mennonite mission efforts among Native Americans in Montana.

A native of Oregon, Zehr (1909-1993) turned a childhood interest in movies into a career, starting Better Films Library and Productions in 1946 and making mostly evangelistic films. In 1953, he was appointed to the General Conference Mennonite Church's new Film Committee. Its first project was *The Call of the Cheyenne*, completed in 1955.

By 1960, Zehr had made five more films about Mennonite missions in Japan, Taiwan, and North America. In addition, he made 25 movies on other topics. They are all in the Historical Committee's archives in North Newton, Kan.

The National Film Preservation Foundation, based in San Francisco, is dedicated to preserving films that would be unlikely to survive without public support. Started in 1997, it has funded the preservation of more than 1,300 films.

Missionary matriarch dies 60 years after leaving husband in China

In 1948, turmoil in China forced Mennonite missionary Susan Schultz Bartel and her five children to return to the United States, leaving their husband and father, Loyal, behind. Sixty years later, on Jan. 10, Susan died at the age of 107, having never seen Loyal again.

Susan was a native of Mountain Lake, Minn., and met Loyal at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. He was a son of Henry C. and Nellie Schmidt Bartel, who started the first Mennonite mission in China. After their marriage, Loyal took Susan back to China under the China Mennonite Mission Society, his parents' organization. It was supported by the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, Mennonite Brethren, and Missionary Church.

With the rise of Communism after World War II, China became increasingly unsafe for foreigners. His family left the country, but Loyal remained as a Chinese citizen. Susan's hopes to reunite were never realized, although they remained in periodic contact via letter. He was killed in a raid on his home in 1971.

Susan and her children first moved to Mountain Lake but eventually settled in Wheaton, Ill., where she worked at Scripture Press and taught Sunday school at Wheaton Bible Church. A memorial service was held May 10 at Cornerstone Bible Church in Mountain Lake. The

congregation is a member of the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches, formerly the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. — *Fellowship Focus*

Harold S. Bender biographer Albert Keim dies at age 72



Albert Keim

Longtime Mennonite history professor and author Albert N. Keim died June 27 at the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville.

Keim, 72, had a successful liver transplant last year but had been in declining health in recent months.

Keim taught history at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., from 1965 until his retirement in 2000 and also served seven years as academic dean during that time. Two of his books, *Harold S. Bender* and *The CPS Story: An Illustrated History of Civilian Public Service*, were included in "The Essential Anabaptist/Mennonite History Reading List" in the April 2008 issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. Other books included *Compulsory Education and the Amish: The Right Not to Be Modern* and *The Politics of Conscience: The Historic Peace Churches and War, 1917-1955*.

Keim also served on the Historical Committee of the former Mennonite Church from 1984 to 1992, chairing the committee for the last seven of those years.

He was born into an Amish family at Hartville, Ohio, and went on to earn a bachelor's degree from EMU, a master's degree from the University of Virginia, and his doctorate from Ohio State University. He is survived by his wife, Kathy Fisher, a daughter, Melody Ann Keim of Lancaster, Pa., two grandsons and seven siblings. A memorial service was held July 1 at Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg.

Oldest Mennonite Church USA congregations west of the Rockies

1. Zion Mennonite Church, Canby, Ore., 1893
2. First Mennonite Church, Paso Robles, Calif., 1897
3. Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church, 1899
4. Menno Mennonite Church, Ritzville, Wash., 1900
5. First Mennonite Church, Upland, Calif., 1903

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by Mark Jantzen



10 Pressure points

by Jerome Waltner



16 The lesson of unwanted stones

by Rich Preheim

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Microfilms of Volumes I-L of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from ProQuest Information and Learning, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346.

Conflicts,
like flashes
of lightning,
illuminate
the fissures
within the church ...



Fighting Mennonites

Reflections on the role of conflict in Mennonite history

by Mark Jantzen

On June 7, 1874, Bernhard Fieguth, a young man from the Heubuden Mennonite congregation in the Vistula Delta of modern-day Poland, went to church to take communion. Mennonite congregations in that time and place administered the Lord's Supper only to members who were in good standing. Fieguth was not, having been banned for joining the army the year before. Since 1867, German law had required Mennonite young men to serve in either combatant or noncombatant roles, but congregational guidelines prohibited any such service. Fieguth had obeyed the former while church leadership was trying to uphold the latter. Fieguth's father boasted to other members during the previous week that Heubuden elder Gerhard Penner would have to serve his son communion or go to jail. Penner's son Heinrich asked Fieguth as he entered the church if he really intended to take communion. Fieguth replied he wished to determine if the elder would give him communion or not. Penner refused him. A week later the county prosecutor filed charges against Penner for violating an 1873 law concerning the limits of church discipline. This law was aimed at preventing Catholic priests from denying communion to their parishioners for political reasons at a time when the Prussian state and the Catholic church were locked in a conflict known to German historians as the *Kulturkampf*, or culture wars, as we might call them today. The law was applied to Penner now as well, who eventually had to pay a fine of 25 *Reichsthaler*, roughly the equivalent of a week's pay, in lieu of a one-week jail sentence.¹

I have written about or told this story in various venues over the last decade and received

three different types of responses that I think are typical of Mennonite approaches to conflict in our history.² Those who identify with the Mennonites who left Europe to avoid military service and those who favor church discipline admire the elder. Those who stayed in Europe longer or have remained there as well as those who feel church discipline has been a heavy-handed source of oppression in the past wonder if the story is fair to young Fieguth. What else was going on in the churches at that time? What alternatives did Fieguth and Penner have that they did not pursue as each chose to escalate this conflict? A third reaction has been one of concern over the airing of Mennonite obstinacy. Surely the role of history is to edify and uplift the church today, not to put images of rebelling or indifferent youth and cantankerous, inflexible leadership into readers' or listeners' heads.

What then can be gained from studying the history of Mennonite conflicts beyond creating dismay and disillusionment or renewing old polarizing positions? Conflicts are important to Mennonite historians because they have been an significant generator of sources, because the commitment to the discernment of the community as a key way to learn God's will means that conflict is genetically encoded in Anabaptist and Mennonite history, because thinking holistically about Mennonite history means we have to include all sides of multiple conflicts, and because sometimes growth and a new self-awareness can result from the experience of conflict.

Conflicts, like flashes of lightning, illuminate the fissures within the church, or, to put it another way, they create great

sources. Secular court records, not the church, preserved Bernard Fieguth's story. George Marsden, a prominent historian of American conservative Protestantism, has noted this feature of conflict for his field. The same insight applies to our tradition as well, perhaps even more so, since for much of our history institutional structures and record-keeping were so informal. Divisions and conflicts sparked letters and minutes to be recorded. Without that impetus the sources for early modern and 19th-century Mennonite history would be even thinner. In many cases the outcomes of conflicts resulted in emigration patterns and new movements that are also "records" we can read.

In the 19th century, for example, the sorting out among Amish and Mennonites over how to respond to the use of the English language, revivals, and progressivism suggests what various congregations, leaders, and members were thinking at that time even in lieu of written records. Tracking the emergence of an Amish Mennonite movement that later merged with the Mennonite church or the Old Order movements among both Amish and Mennonites indicates what geographic, cultural, or personality factors influenced those decisions. The same could be said for the sorting out among Mennonites in central and eastern Europe over military service, newly

At Heubuden Mennonite Church (below), elder Gerhard Penner's (inset) refusal to serve communion to a church member in the military created a conflict resulting in Penner breaking secular law.

Mennonite Church USA Archives – Newton



Anabaptism's contentious genesis

Despite the church's reluctance to acknowledge the conflicts that have shaped it, Anabaptism was created out of Europe's religious, political, and cultural clashes of the 16th century. After all, George Blaurock, Conrad Grebel, Felix Mantz, and their cohorts chose to be rebaptized because they disagreed so strongly with the church and state authorities of the time.

Yet the members of the fledgling movement were hardly at peace with each other. Dissension quickly arose over issues such as relations to the state, use of the sword, and the acceptance of supporters who chose not to publicly identify themselves with Anabaptism. In this strife-torn context, a group of Anabaptist leaders met at the village of Schleithem near the Swiss-German border in February 1527.

The gathering produced the seven-point Schleithem Confession, articulating the faith's beliefs and providing at least some resolution to the prevailing conflict. As the first Anabaptist confession of faith, it provided a rallying point for adherents and quite likely saved the movement from succumbing to disagreement, confusion, and persecution.

First among many

It took nearly a century after their arrival in the New World, but in 1778 American Mennonites experienced their first schism. When the American Revolution broke out, Franconia Conference in eastern Pennsylvania considered the colonies in rebellion and maintained its loyalty to Great Britain, as it earlier promised to the crown. That included refusing to declare allegiance to the colony and opposing a war tax.

Bishop Christian Funk initially agreed with the Franconia stance, but that changed by 1777. After reading the Pennsylvania constitution with its provisions for freedom of religion, he maintained that the colonies should not be denounced as rebellious, nor did he oppose the oath of allegiance or war tax.

Funk was excommunicated in 1778, and he soon assumed leadership of a new body of supporters. Called "Funkites," they eventually had at least four congregations in eastern Pennsylvania after attempts at reconciliation with Franconia failed. The Funkites died out by the mid-19th century.

imposed in the German, Austrian, and Russian empires in the 1860s and '70s. Was noncombatant status or forestry service an adequate solution or a worldly compromise? Emigration motives are, of course, complex, and Mennonites were seldom single-issue immigrants. Nonetheless, results of those theological conflicts are at least partially visible in Mennonite emigration patterns.

The crucial nature of conflict in even defining "Mennonite" has been especially apparent to the non-Mennonites who take my class on "Mennonite History, Life, and Thought." Students with Mennonite background already know the basic contours of the story, but for outsiders the question of what is "Mennonite" is annoyingly perplex. One topic in the course is Mennonite material culture, which often leads to the discussion and eating of *zwieback*, *semmel*, *mohnkuchen*, *borscht*, and, very rarely, shoofly pie. Mennonite students are quick to disagree about which of these foods is most authentically Mennonite, each, of course, favoring his or her own grandmother's dish. Similar discussions evolve around the issue, given our setting in south-central Kansas and the competitive nature of collegiate athletics, of whether Hesston, Tabor, or Bethel is the "real" Mennonite college of the area. From there, of course, it is not difficult to draw parallels to the question of whether Michael Sattler and the separatism of the Schleithem Confession; Pilgram Marpeck's urban, balanced moderation; Balthasar Hubmaier's realist politics; or Menno Simons' ingathering of nonviolent Melchiorites best represents "true" Anabaptism.

Some students become frustrated with the lack of clarity. They want answers to these questions. Who was right? What does Anabaptism mean? What did Anabaptists believe then and Mennonites now? Is there really such a thing as Mennonite furniture, as Kauffman Museum in North Newton, Kan., claims, or is it just furniture that happens to have been made by Mennonites? Are Mennonites an ethnic group or an embodiment of a belief system?

When pressed for clear and definitive answers, I refer students to the story of pastor Jan von Ophoorn as related in C. J. Dyck's *Introduction to Mennonite History*. Following a discussion of the Frisian-Flemish schism among Anabaptists in northern Europe in the 1560s, Dyck notes that the both the Flemish and Frisians in turn split again and some of those subgroups divided yet again. He goes on to note the tragic and comic end of this process when Ophoorn



Russian Mennonite conscientious objectors at work in the forestry service as an alternative to compulsory military service, 1913. Some church members contended that even such work comprised the Mennonite peace position. Mennonite Church USA Archives – Newton

banned everyone from his congregation in Emden except for himself and his wife.³

This sequence of events highlights the fact that Mennonites do not have a structure to “decide” their conflicts. Mennonites have never universally accepted either hierarchical leadership or adherence to a single confession, methods that other Christians use to work at unity. A movement that has the decisions of adults to commit to it or walk away from it at its core is going to face open-ended conflict and the repeated prospect of groups going their own way.

How we think about the scope of Mennonite history therefore clearly changes the way we write about conflict in that history. Here it is instructive to lay two Mennonite history books side by side. Martin Klaassen was a teacher in the Trakt colony in Russia who in 1873 published *The History of the Non-resistant Anabaptist Congregations from the Time of the Apostles to the Present*. He was an important leader, along with Claas Epp and others, in the movement of Mennonites to central Asia in 1880.⁴

Klaassen’s account of Mennonite history makes a beeline from the apostolic church to the Anabaptists and then to Prussia. Dutch and other German Mennonites merit a couple of pages, American Mennonites get a short paragraph, Swiss Mennonites are not mentioned after the 16th century at all. Russia is dealt with only as a refuge for Prussian Mennonites, but none of the internal developments of the colonies are covered. In terms of Mennonite identity, Klaassen notes those who were accepting of military service “kept the name of Mennonite but denied its essential core.”⁵ As the title of his book already indicated, for him it was clear who was and was not Mennonite. No Mennonite could serve in the military, and any who did were no longer Mennonite. Since they were dropped from church membership rolls they also had to be dropped from the history. The fact that only a few years after his book was printed no Mennonites by this definition remained in western or central Europe would be for Klaassen a lamentable fact, not an argument to widen the historical tent.

John Roth’s recent *Stories: How Mennonites Came to Be* takes an inclusive approach to Mennonite history.⁶ He writes on 16th-century origins, including the Hutterites; on Dutch and Russian Mennonites; on American Mennonites of various kinds; and on emerging Mennonite churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. To place the outline of Roth’s book next to Klaassen’s is instructive. Since Roth wants to continue tracking developments among different groups of Mennonites, he grants groups on different sides of the various conflicts continuing status as Mennonites. To take a definitive stance on a historical conflict implies leaving one side or the other out of history. Sometimes such a clear stand as Klaassen took might result in unclear history. My students, for example, have always appreciated the simplicity and attractiveness of Harold S. Bender’s *The Anabaptist Vision*, but only a minority would agree that it is an adequate history of Mennonite beginnings.

Roth has highlighted the centrality of conflict to an inclusive



Barn near Belleville, Pa., that hosted a churchwide Amish meeting in 1863. The barn was destroyed by fire in 1992. Mennonite Church USA Archives – Goshen

Family feud

Twenty-first-century Amish and Mennonites are cousins in the Anabaptist family of faith. But more than 300 years ago, they were estranged spiritual brothers and sisters. In the late 17th century, Mennonite minister Jakob Ammann began agitating for stricter discipline among the churches of the Alsace, Switzerland, and southern Germany. He and his followers were strongly opposed by other church leaders, and attempts to resolve the tensions were fruitless. By 1693, significant portions of the European church were dividing into Mennonite and “Ammannish” contingents. They remain today, although without the acrimony of their origins.

Mennonites have never universally accepted either hierarchical leadership or adherence to a single confession, methods that other Christians use to work at unity.

Mennonite story. In his introduction, significantly entitled “Conflict and Renewal in the Church Tradition,” he notes that “the solution to our contemporary conflicts will not be found in pretending they do not exist or by writing them out of our history.” Conflicts are rooted in human nature, central to the biblical narrative, and probably better than the only realistic alternative, which is massive indifference.⁷ This assessment agrees with the comments that students make when discussing Bender’s *The Anabaptist Vision*. Mennonite students see the conflict in the congregations they grew up in, and all students have experienced or heard about Mennonite conflicts or disagreements at Bethel College.

Ignoring the conflicts or following only one thread of Mennonite history to the outcome we prefer is a disservice to the complexity of the past and leaves us ill-prepared to understand and decide about the present.

Many students find it oddly comforting to know that conflicts have a long and important role in Mennonite history even as they lament the lack of clarity that results. As Roth points out in his conclusion, conflicts over music, worship, education, lifestyle, wealth, and outside theological influences are not new, and we are not alone in facing them.⁸

A final insight gained from a focus on conflict in Mennonite history is the occasional emergence of growth and new insights. This benefit of conflict becomes quickly apparent, for example, as one reads the history of African Mennonites in *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*.⁹ Although conflict is not as systematically explored as in Roth’s book, it remains a major theme. One major axis of conflict was between the expectations of Western Mennonites and those of Africans. Western Mennonites, for example, often thought they were “bringing” God to Africa, while the latter knew that God had always been there and was already working powerfully. Learning to see the African perspective was

and is a painful process for Westerners, but those who have gained that insight would now label that experience of conflict a clear gain for the church.

The same could be said of struggles over when and how Westerners turned leadership and resources over to Africans. Despite the great pain involved in this transition, empowering Africans to lead their own churches often led to growth that could not have happened any other way. While Western missionaries planted important seeds, much of the growth in the church in Africa has happened since leadership has come from Africans themselves.

Nor was conflict limited to white-black issues, as *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts* points out. African Mennonites, like those in Europe and America, come from many different ethnic groups and find it difficult on occasion to trust each other across these lines. Sometimes these differences resulted in new conferences, such as the Evangelical Mennonite Community in Congo. At other times, Christianity bridged these divisions, as in the story of Elisha Meso and Wakuru Mwangwa’s marriage.¹⁰ To what extent these African divisions and unions have parallels, for example, in Frisian-Flemish or Amish-Mennonite divisions or in the ethnic melting pot unity and disunity of Mennonite Church USA’s Western District and South Central conferences remains to be explored.

At a different level these issues of valuing or grieving conflict has been discussed recently in the virtual pages of *Mennonite Life*. Some see an imperative to heal the 16th-century rift between Catholics and Mennonites, the original conflict in our history. My Bethel colleague, historian Penelope Moon, however, has argued for the importance of disagreement for intellectual growth. One sees the advantage of disagreements, for example, for the students we teach. Her larger question, however, is whether conflict and diversity do not in fact strengthen the church. A lack of conflict might indicate total unity and complete understanding of God’s will for us today. It might, however, also indicate a single voice

or view dominating and closing down a necessary discussion or a kind of homogenized in-group thinking that may jeopardize the church's ability to relate to the world or face new challenges.¹¹

In the end, I think the challenge of those students asking for clarity from Mennonite history remains. Embracing and discussing all sides of the endless Mennonite conflicts might well leave some wondering why bother at all if there is no right or wrong. Yet ignoring the conflicts or following only one thread of Mennonite history to the outcome we prefer is a disservice to the complexity of the past and leaves us ill-prepared to understand and decide about the present.

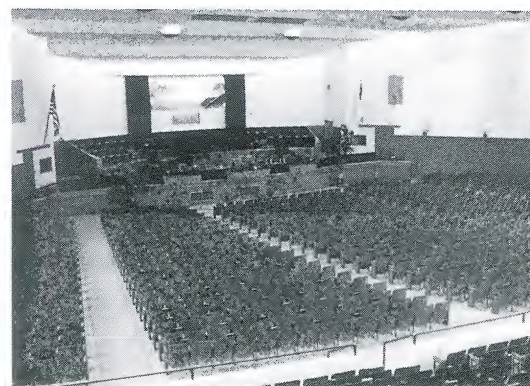
As historians our charge is to study both change and continuity in the human condition. Yet we can never accomplish this task perfectly or objectively because we cannot escape our own personal perspective and experience.¹² Each time we write about the identity of Mennonites in the past we imply something about the identity of Mennonites today. At the end of the day history can at best gently shape but never dictate contemporary choices. Students, along with the rest of us, to some extent have to make choices about what Anabaptists believed and did and what Mennonites should believe and do. Ideally, like the Anabaptist hermeneutical community, this discernment can take place by learning from and with others interested in the historical accounts. Studying conflicts in Mennonite history helps us understand past choices better and may make us more conscious of the influences operating on us as we make our own choices today. For a movement founded on the assumption that adults need to make their own decisions, this does not seem like a bad thing.

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Brethren's birth

The second-largest Mennonite denomination in the United States is the Mennonite Brethren, which will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2010. But its emergence may not have happened if not for the intransigence of the main body of Russian Mennonites.

By the mid-1800s, spiritual revival was being felt in part of the Mennonite colonies in southern Russia. These reinvigorated "Brethren," as they called themselves, advocated changes in the church but were met with resistance, and in 1860 they formed their own church. The response was severe, as the new group was initially denied permission to hold separate worship services, although the Russian government eventually granted official recognition.



Reedley (Calif.) Mennonite Brethren Church, ca. 1943, long the largest MB congregation in the United States. Mennonite Church USA Archives – Newton

Endnotes:

- 1 The records of this case, from which this description of the events in the Heubuden church was reconstructed, are in Berlin at the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Hauptabteilung I, Repositur 76 (Kulturministerium), III (Evangelisch-Geistliche Angelegenheiten), Sektion 1 (Generalia), Abteilung XIIIa (Sekten- und Judensachen), no. 2 (Die Angelegenheiten der Mennoniten), vols. 11-2.
- 2 Most accessible in Mark Jantzen, "'Whoever Will Not Defend His Homeland Should Leave It!' German Conscription and Prussian Mennonite Emigration to the Great Plains, 1860-1890," *Mennonite Life* 58, no. 3 (September 2003): <http://www.bethelks.edu/mennonitelife/2003Sept/jantzen.php>.
- 3 Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, 3rd ed. (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1993), 126.
- 4 Quiring, Horst and Richard D. Thiessen. "Klaassen, Martin (1820-1881)." Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. February 2007. Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Retrieved 12 February 2008 <<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/K5320.html>>. Martin Klaassen, *Geschichte der wehrlosen taufgesinnten Gemeinden: von den Zeiten der Apostel bis auf die Gegenwart - ein Beitrag zur Kenntniss und rechten Würdigung der kirchengeschichtlichen Stellung derselben* (Danzig: E. Groening, 1873). Walter Klaassen, "A belated review: Martin Klaassen's 'Geschichte der Wehrlosen taufgesinnten Gemeinden' published in 1873," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 49 (January 1975):43-52.
- 5 Klaassen, *Geschichte der wehrlosen taufgesinnten Gemeinden*, 284.
- 6 John Roth, *Stories: How Mennonites Came to Be* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2006).
- 7 Ibid., 15.
- 8 Ibid., 235-44.
- 9 Aleme Checole, et al., *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*, 3rd ed., Vol. 1, *A Global Mennonite History* (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 2006).
- 10 Ibid., 195-8.
- 11 Penelope Adams Moon, "Broken and Blessed: A Response to Darrin W. Snyder Belousek," *Mennonite Life* 67, no. 2 (Fall 2007), <http://www.bethelks.edu/mennonitelife/2007fall/moon.php>.
- 12 Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994).



Pressure points

The past shows that burying conflicts doesn't mean they won't resurface

by Jerome Waltner

The meetinghouse of Hopefield Mennonite Church, rural Moundridge, Kan., erected in 1882. The congregation continues to meet in the original building, while Eden Mennonite Church, which split from Hopefield in 1895, has grown into a much larger congregation nearby.

Mennonite Church USA Archives — Newton

A woodworker decides to build a table. He selects a piece of wood and begins to work on it. He makes it nice and smooth and flat and straight. The piece seems perfect. But he needs to rip the piece in half, that is, cut it along the length of the grain. As he proceeds to cut it on his table saw, the woodworker notices something odd. The board had been straight before he started the cut, but now the two pieces aren't staying that way. As he goes farther and farther with the cut, the two halves begin to curve toward each other. The gap left by the blade, which, incidentally, is spinning at a speed of 50 to 100 miles an hour, closes as the two halves press together. At this point, one of two things might happen. If the woodworker was careful and left the safety equipment on the saw, he will find it more and more difficult to push the piece through the saw, and he will be forced to turn the saw off, remove the board, and start again, hoping that the second cut will take away enough material that the wood won't bind a second time. But, if the woodworker wasn't quite so cautious and had removed a piece of safety equipment called a splitter, which keeps the two halves of the board from pinching the blade, something much more serious might happen. As the wood pinches the blade, the teeth of the blade might grab the wood, rather than cut it. As a result, the board could be suddenly propelled back at the woodworker, traveling between 50 and 100 miles an hour, the same speed as the blade. It's a phenomenon called kickback, and I've seen it leave a dent in a steel door and a nasty bruise on a woodworker.

The board in question looked good and normal. As the tree was growing, however, it underwent some sort of trauma—perhaps was damaged in a storm. Whatever happened, it put pressure on the grains of the tree. That pressure was contained within that board until our woodworker decided to cut it. Then the pressure found an avenue of release.

There seems to be a similar pattern in church conflict. On the surface, everything can appear fine. However, if the church undergoes any sort of change or challenge, the pressures hiding within can suddenly release and bring the church to a screeching halt or do lasting damage to those involved. Conflict contained is not conflict resolved. Great and regrettable examples of this are the relationships within Hoffnungsfeld (Hopefield) Mennonite Church of rural Moundridge, Kan., that led to a split and the creation of a second congregation, Eden Mennonite Church.

I grew up in Eden Mennonite Church. My grandfather, Andreas Waltner, was one of the congregation's first leaders, and I maintained my membership there until about ten years ago. I also wrote the Eden centennial history, and it is on that research that much of this article is based. So when approaching the issue of the split between Hopefield and Eden, I cannot help but have certain sympathies for one side over the other. I have, however, tried to be even-handed. I don't feel that there are any heroes or villains in the story of the split, only a group of people who were doing their best to follow God and get along in the world. My goal is not to criticize these people, but to show how we might be able to learn from their missteps and what we might be able to expect when a church undergoes a split.

Hopefield was the first Kansas congregation of Mennonite immigrants from the Eastern European region of Volhynia. The 64 founding families arrived in 1874 as part of the mass migration of Mennonites and Hutterites from Russia to the plains of North America. Like many of the new congregations around it, Hopefield soon

joined the General Conference Mennonite Church. In 1895, however, the congregation split into two groups. Hoffnungsfeld-Salem continued in the original meetinghouse, while Hoffnungsfeld-Eden built a new church nearby. Over the years, the two groups—eventually called Hopefield and Eden—considered reunification and reconciliation several times, but nothing ever came of these attempts. Eden has grown, today with a membership of more than 700, but Hopefield has declined through the years and now has about 75 members. It has considered closing its doors more than once and has severed its ties with Mennonite Church USA.

That's about it. What more needs to be said? If you asked some of the members of the church at the time of the split, the answer would probably be, "Nothing! You've said quite enough, thank you very much."



Surviving members of the Volhynian Mennonite 1874 migration to south-central Kansas in 1944. Hopefield Mennonite Church of rural Moundridge was the first Volhynian Mennonite congregation. Mennonite Church USA Archives – Newton

The basic method of conflict resolution for those involved seemed to be that if we simply ignore the problem, everything will be all right. The problem with this approach is that the split left unresolved issues and feelings that continued to affect the community for the next 100 years.

The event that seemed to precipitate the split happened in 1893 when elder Jacob Stucky died. Stucky had led the congregation for 41 years, dating to its time in Volhynia. Such a loss could obviously cause a disruption in the congregation, but the problems seemed to go deeper. Even before Stucky's death, there had been divisions in the congregation. Two groups emerged, defined by three different elements. The first was doctrinal. The more conservative segment of the congregation was skeptical about the church's role in the General Conference Mennonite Church, its relationship with Bethel College at nearby Newton, and its involvement in missions. The liberal faction was much more supportive of these endeavors. The second element was familial. The split seemed to

One of the frustrating parts of the split is that those involved were never either willing or able to address its underlying causes.

happen along family lines, with one family holding sway over the more conservative faction. The final element was administrative, and this was the actual impetus for the split. Stucky apparently anticipated problems in the congregation's selection of a successor, so on his deathbed he requested that congregational leadership be assumed by two local elders, Dietrich Gaeddert of Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, near Inman, and Jacob Buller of Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, near Goessel.

The conservative segment of the congregation viewed this request as something just short of holy writ, while the liberals saw it as little more than a suggestion that need not necessarily be followed. They instead supported Peter Krehbiel, who had been Stucky's subordinate for a number of years. Unable to resolve this disagreement, Western District, the local area conference of the General Conference Mennonite Church, was called to mediate. Western District determined that while an elder could express a preference for a successor, the congregation was under no obligation to follow it. So,

the succession problems that Stucky foresaw were not alleviated but rather exacerbated by his actions. Tensions between the two sides affected the business of the church, and there were times when church business could not be conducted because of member absences. In one case, there was no mission offering taken because the mission treasurer was absent. One or two such incidents could probably be dismissed as anomalies, perhaps caused by illness or accident. But such absences were too regular and too frequent to be completely innocent. The two sides grew further and further apart until the division of 1895.

One of the frustrating parts of the split is that those involved were never either willing or able to address its underlying causes. In 1893, according to Hopefield records, a conflict between two ministers was addressed, with the congregation resolving to close the matter "and not to bring it up again." It is perhaps understandable that those involved did not want to discuss it later. But the tensions within the church had not been eased, and they would reappear, even after the two groups separated. As philosopher and writer George Santayana noted, those who do not learn the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them.

Three examples reveal how the tensions within the community could manifest themselves. The first occurred in the 1920s. After the split, the Eden group built a church a half mile west of the Hopefield building. More than two decades later, Eden had outgrown its meeting place and was looking to build a new, larger structure. The congregational leadership approached Hopefield and suggested that as a part of the Eden expansion, the two groups reunite, sell the old building and land and use the proceeds to help pay for the new building. Initially the response seemed good. As time went on, however, the discussion between the two groups turned sour. Hopefield was once again undergoing a split, between those who supported the merger and those who opposed it, and it became very ugly. One side tried to lock the other side out of the

building. One side also filed a \$200,000 lawsuit against the other. The church finally brought in an arbitration board and reconciliation was reported to have been achieved, including a prohibition on “reviving any of the matters that are considered as settled and forever disposed of by this agreement.”

Perhaps there was some genuine reconciliation as a result of the efforts of the arbitration board, but it is hard to believe that a conflict that stretched on for ten years would go away easily. Besides, in many ways, the damage had already been done. A large segment of the Hopefield membership had left and joined other churches, many of them going to Eden. And although the Hopefield leadership may have felt reconciled to the events, it seems unlikely that those who had suffered unkind treatment from either side would simply forget that treatment, especially when one of the ways the church decided to handle the issue was to pretend that it had not existed in the first place.

The second example of ongoing effects of congregation tensions is a story my father told me. In the 1970s, as Mennonites in central Kansas prepared to celebrate their centennial in the United States, another proposal was made to Hopefield about reuniting with Eden. Ever since the split, Hopefield had stayed about the same size while Eden had grown substantially. By the 1970s, however, both congregations had begun to shrink due changes in the rural economy and in local demographics (mechanized agriculture required fewer laborers, and family size dropped from six to eight children in a family to two or three). Under the proposal, the Eden church would be the location of the unified congregation, and the Hopefield building, the site of the first Mennonite Volhynian congregation in Kansas, would be converted into a museum. Initial response seemed favorable, until a man from one of the leading families in Hopefield stood up and said he thought it was the stupidest idea he had ever heard. That ended any talk of unification.

As this was anecdotal, I would normally treat such a story with a certain amount of skepticism, but it does highlight at least the perception that one or two families were in charge, and that if they did not like a particular idea, it was dead, no matter what the rest of the church might think. That perception, whether true

Two sides to change

Conflict among the Mennonites of northern Indiana spawned not one but two new bodies within two years in the 1870s. Innovations such as Sunday schools and publications began making inroads, much to the chagrin of more conservative church members. Although a split was successfully avoided for a number of years, tensions kept bubbling. Finally in 1872, the break came. A conservative faction under the leadership of bishop Jacob Wisler withdrew, resulting in the formation of the first Old Order Mennonite group.



Daniel Brenneman

But there was a limit to change. Another Indiana minister, Daniel Brenneman, was an ardent supporter of revival meetings, English-language worship, and four-part singing. Repeated efforts to keep him in line with church beliefs and practices failed, and Brenneman was excommunicated in 1874. He and his followers formed the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, which today is part of the Missionary Church.



Current meetinghouse of Eden Mennonite Church, rural Moundridge, Kan., built in 1990, 95 years after its split with Hopefield Mennonite Church.

Mennonite Church USA Archives – Newton

or not, shaped the way in which the two congregations dealt with mutual issues. Indeed, it seemed that about once every generation, there was a migration from Hopefield to Eden. The impression I got growing up in Eden was that these migrants were those who had wanted to deviate from the path chosen by the families in charge at Hopefield and had either become fed up with being ignored or were pushed out. I'm certain that the perception of those in

Destroying records, dismissing inquiries about events, or downplaying the severity of the situation only serve to frustrate future generations when the same issues come back again.

Hopefield was probably different, and I'm not saying that my perception is necessarily any more accurate, but it does reinforce the charge that family domination was a factor in people's perceptions.

The third example comes from my own experience. As Eden approached the centennial of the split with Hopefield, I was asked to write a history of the congregation. So I went about collecting materials, doing oral histories, combing through church records, and visiting the Mennonite Library and Archives on the Bethel College campus. One evening I met with the committee overseeing the project and shared some of the information I had found, including a book on the attempted reconciliation with Hopefield in the 1920s. I felt that this could be a valuable resource in understanding something that just was not talked about. One member of the committee, however, had a radically different view. She was almost livid that this book even existed because it, like other material printed at the time, was supposed to have been destroyed. This woman was also a member of Eden, although her family had been a part of Hopefield at the time of the attempted unification. I was taken aback at her reaction. For me, this was a piece of a puzzle whose value had yet to be determined. For her, it was almost an obscenity that should

be destroyed. I'm certain that if she had her way, that is exactly what would have happened to the book, as she said in no uncertain terms that she was going to have a talk with the archivist about how best to get rid of it. I have no doubt that her heart was in the right place, but I still fail to see how destroying records makes the problem better. It only seems to make it harder to understand, and thus more difficult to deal with.

What can be learned from Hopefield-Eden split and the subsequent events? First, an unwillingness to acknowledge a problem does not mean the problem ceases to exist. Destroying records, dismissing inquiries about events, or downplaying the severity of the situation only serve to frustrate future generations when the same issues come back again. Second, any sort of reconciliation should take into account the entire body of the church. A statement from the leadership that all is now well will not necessarily change the hearts and minds of the rest of the congregation. Third, when placed under the stress that causes and accompanies a church split, do not be surprised if the wounds go deep and last long after the issue is deemed settled. Hurtful comments, especially when uttered in a church setting, can leave lasting scars, and these scars will color any discussion of the events regarding the split, the church's identity, or its future direction. Finally, there are no easy answers. When events are such that a group of people feels the need to go separate directions, no proclamation or constitutional change will magically make everything all better. Perhaps the best advice to any group undergoing this sort of turmoil is to remember that we'll all be united in Christ one day, and we need to conduct ourselves in a manner that honors God and not our own feelings and agenda.

Waltner is the author of This Do in Remembrance of Me: History of Eden Mennonite Church and a woodworker and furniture maker in Newton, Kan.

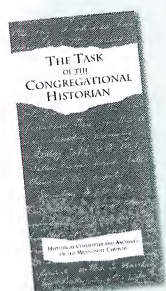
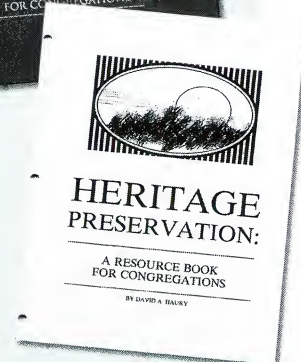
Resources from Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee

to help preserve our heritage, interpret our faith stories and proclaim God's work among us

Heritage Celebrations: A Resource Book for Congregations by Wilma McKee
Packed with information and ideas, it encourages congregations planning events such as anniversaries to joyfully remember their heritage and gain a vision for future mission. \$10.95

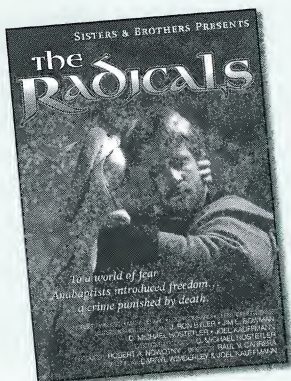


Heritage Preservation: A Resource Book for Congregations by David A. Haury
A companion piece to Heritage Celebrations, this 30-page manual provides direction for congregations to keep their important historical records, including what to keep and how to keep them. \$5.00



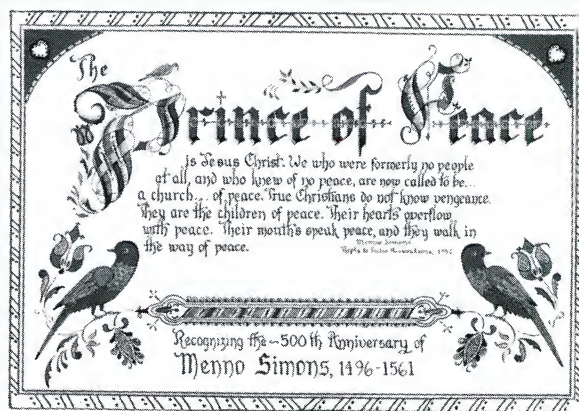
The Task of the Congregational Historian

A 16-page pamphlet with tips for documenting and preserving a congregation's history. \$2.00



The Radicals DVD The major motion picture about Margaretha and Michael Sattler and Anabaptism's birth in sixteenth-century Europe. Includes commentary by Myron Augsburger, interviews with the film's producers and other extras. Also available in Spanish. \$29.99 plus shipping and handling (\$25 per copy for multiple copies).

Menno Simons commemorative fraktur A teaching tool as well as artwork, this four-color fraktur (a traditional German calligraphic art form) celebrates the 500th anniversary of the birth Menno Simons in 1596. Created by noted artist Roma J. Ruth, it features text from Menno's own words on Jesus as the Prince of Peace and incorporates in the border I Corinthians 3:11, Menno's favorite Scripture. \$25.00 plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. Add 50¢ per additional copy. Also available as note cards. \$3 for four, \$6.50 for 10, \$9 for 15, \$11 for 20.



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The lessons of unwanted stones

When Joshua commanded the 12 tribes of Israel to gather stones, it was for a monument to remind God's people of the miraculous way they were brought into Canaan. Doing so was a way to prompt future generations to ask, "What mean these stones?" We have continued to gather metaphorical stones and create figurative monuments, some of them pointing to occurrences less glorious than entering the Promised Land. But that doesn't mean we still don't ask what those markers signify.

Why are there so many Mennonite groups? Why did those people leave the conference? Why did that congregation split? Why is that minister angry?

Answers to such questions usually reveal humanity's imperfections. That is, if answers are provided at all. Unfortunately, as Jerome Waltner's article in this issue shows, our tendency is to offer as little information as possible, as if by doing so will somehow make the negative developments in our lives disappear.

But they usually don't. One Mennonite Church USA area conference is preparing to write its history but struggling with how to deal with the withdrawal of a significant portion of its membership several decades ago. It was a move that divided not only the conference but also

families within it. Some people subsequently have advocated not telling that story at all because of the pain and negativity associated with it. Yet those stones are there, in the form of two distinct groups that used to be united. Someone is going to ask what they mean.

Questions deserve answers because questions are attempts to gain understanding. When they are about the shortcomings in our faithfulness and fellowship, the answers need to be given with care and sensitivity. But they need to be given. After all, accounts of failure are as much a part of the story of God's people as are accounts of success.

Consider King David, the disciple Peter, and the apostle Paul, religious giants who all made dramatic mistakes. David orchestrated murder and committed adultery. Peter denied knowing Jesus. And Paul persecuted Christians before becoming one himself. The Bible records them for a reason, because such incidents have much



to teach us about ourselves and about the God we follow. Yet we can't learn from them if we bury them like unwanted stones. —*Rich Preheim*



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That they may be one

The creation of AMBS and the development
of MC-GC relations

Census details Froschauer Bibles in North America

For the early Swiss Anabaptists, the Scriptures printed by Zurich printer Christoph Froschauer and his nephew, also named Christoph, were the Bibles of choice. Under the direction of Ulrich Zwingli, it was the first German Bible translated from the original Greek and Hebrew. It was popular among the emerging Protestant churches in Europe as well as with the Anabaptists.

David Luthy, a member of the Old Order Amish church at Aylmer, Ont., has compiled a census of the 168 known Froschauer Bibles that came to North America. The census covers 35 editions printed between 1524 and 1589. Sixty-three Bibles are in Amish or Mennonite libraries or archives. The Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society has 12, and the Muddy Creek Farm Library, an Old Order Mennonite library in Ephrata, Pa., has 11. At least another 10 Bibles with Amish or Mennonite connections are in private collections, and two are in other libraries or archives. The whereabouts of 12 are unknown.

Other institutions with Froschauer Bibles include the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; John Work Garrett Library at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; Luhr Library, Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis; and the San Diego State University Library.

In addition, Luthy has also identified 60 copies of a 1744 reprint that came to North America. Produced in Strasbourg, it was a reprint of the 1536 Froschauer Bible. Of those, at least 15 are in private hands, while nine are at Musselman Library at Bluffton (Ohio) University.

— *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*

'Amish-Jewish' sect recalled

With a three-volume memoir, Goshen, Ind., resident Patricia Hochstetler has recounted her experiences with an "Amish-Jewish cult." With a strange mix of Judaism and conservative Anabaptism, Mack Sharkey in 1951 created Lael Colony in southern Tennessee, particularly drawing Old Order Amish. Hochstetler's books, *Delusion*, *Deception*, and *Deliverance*, describe her life from four years old, when her parents followed Sharkey, until her expulsion from the colony as a teenager. She is now a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen.

The first two books came out in 2007, while the third was published this spring. The publisher is Baker Tritt Press.

In Sharkey's community, according to Hochstetler, children were forbidden from singing or playing with toys, holidays were never celebrated, and adults were forced to adopt celibacy, even within marriages. Lael Colony disbanded after Sharkey's death in 1969.

But others experienced Sharkey as well. He spent several weeks in 1958 with the family of Joseph Yoder, now director of Menno-Hof, the Anabaptist interpretative center in Shipshewana, Ind. Yoder was 16 when Sharkey appeared in his Amish-Mennonite home. "He did not cut his hair or beard," Yoder recalled in *Reunion*, the Menno-Hof newsletter. "My mother and sisters had to cook special for him so that he would not violate any of the Old Testament dietary laws."

Sharkey left the Yoder home when Joseph's father pointed out that the rule of Christ eclipsed the laws of the Old Testament. "Mack Sharkey could not tolerate any person who

stood up to him and confronted him with the biblical truth and the fact that Christ is the fulfillment of the law," Yoder wrote.

Goshen library acquires rare martyr book

The Mennonite Historical Library (MHL) at Goshen (Ind.) College recently purchased a rare book of Anabaptist martyr accounts and hymns that pre-dates *Martyrs Mirror*, the famous 1,290 page book first published in 1660 that documents Anabaptist martyrs.

The 1567 fourth edition copy of *Het Offer des Heeren (A Sacrifice unto the Lord)* is only the second known copy in the world; the other can be found in the Amsterdam Mennonite Library. Its anonymous editor gathered descriptions of the suffering of Dutch Anabaptist martyrs, along with letters they wrote to future generations, eyewitness accounts and hymns written by imprisoned Anabaptists and others describing their deaths.

Given the central, almost iconic, role that the *Martyrs Mirror* has held in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, it makes sense that we would go after the books that helped to shape that text," said MHL director and Goshen history professor John D. Roth. "Unlike *Martyrs Mirror*, the 1567 version of *Het Offer des Heeren* appeared at a time when Anabaptists were still being martyred. So this is a book that was intended to encourage Christians in the midst of suffering; this is a book that literally survived the era of martyrdom."

The book, which is small enough to fit in a pocket, describes itself and its contents as including "many lovely examples of men and women who sought Christ Jesus and eternal, everlasting life with faithful and pure hearts, and who have feared God with their innermost souls."

The purchase was made possible through special funding from Goshen College and individual donors.

Along with the 1567 edition, the MHL also owns the 1570, 1578, 1580 and 1595 editions of *Het Offer des Heeren*.

Four Mennonite U.S. Congressmen and one Mennonite governor

1. Christian William Ramseyer, Republican representative from Iowa, 1915-1933
2. Benjamin F. Welty, Democratic representative from Ohio, 1917-1921
3. Edward Clayton Eicher, Democrat representative from Iowa, 1932-1938
4. Jim Moran, Republican representative from Kansas, 1997-current
5. Harvey Wollman, Democratic governor of South Dakota, 1978-1979

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by Albert N. Keim



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by Rich Preheim

Cover: The original joint administrative committee of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries (from left): Erland Waltner and Samuel F. Pannabecker from Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Harold S. Bender and Paul Mininger from Goshen Biblical Seminary. AMBS

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AMBS begins to rise on its Elkhart campus, 1957. AMBS

This year's 50th anniversary of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary isn't important simply because the school reached a notable milestone. Perhaps more significant is that AMBS became a catalyst for the creation of a new denomination. The 2002 merger of the Mennonite Church (MC) and General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) to form Mennonite Church USA is due in no small part to the seminary that, starting half a century ago, introduced to each other budding young leaders from both denominations. The story of AMBS is also the story of Mennonite Church USA.

The two feature articles in this issue examine the genesis of AMBS from the perspective of the most instrumental figure in the General Conference Mennonite Church and in the Mennonite Church. In an interview, seminary president emeritus Erland Waltner recalls the GC seminary's move from Chicago to Elkhart. An excerpt from Albert N. Keim's *Harold S. Bender* looks at the unfolding of a joint theological education program from the standpoint of the dean of the MC seminary.

Timeline

- 1914 – Bluffton (Ohio) College Bible department reorganized as a seminary.
- 1921 – Bluffton seminary becomes independent Witmarsum Theological Seminary.
- 1931 – Witmarsum closes.
- 1945 – Mennonite Biblical Seminary founded in Chicago, affiliated with the Church of the Brethren's Bethany Theological Seminary.
- 1946 – Goshen (Ind.) College Bible program changed to Goshen Biblical Seminary.
- 1954 – First joint MBS-GBS summer session, held in Goshen.
- 1958 – MBS moves to Elkhart, Ind., launching Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries.
- 1964 – Ross T. Bender named dean of both GBS and MBS.
- 1969 – GBS moves from Goshen campus to Elkhart, joining MBS on the same campus.
- 1990 – Marlin E. Miller named first president of both GBS and MBS.
- 1993 – AMBS incorporated as a single seminary, eliminating MBS-GBS distinctions.



Cooperation's harvest

The growth of inter-Mennonite relations on 55 acres

by Rich Preheim



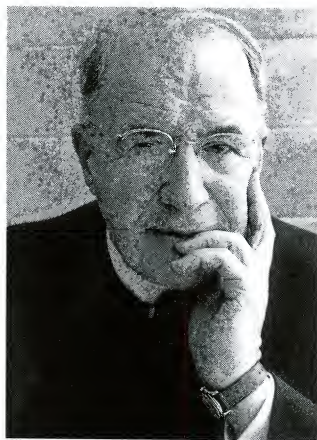
Erland Waltner, MBS president, 1958–78. AMBS

No other individual is identified with Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) as Erland Waltner. The two are practically synonymous, since he has been connected with the school ever since the idea of joint theological education was only a gleam in his and other visionaries' eyes. He was a major force in bringing together the General Conference Mennonite Church-affiliated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (MBS) and the Mennonite Church's Goshen Biblical Seminary (GBS) into an Elkhart, Ind.-based cooperative venture 50 years ago. As MBS president from 1958 to 1978, he helped guide a fledgling operation to maturity, then continued to teach into the 1990s. He still maintains an office in the AMBS main campus building, which was christened Waltner Hall in 2002.

But Waltner's legacy is more than just a seminary. The development of AMBS was crucial in addressing the perceptions and, just as significantly, misperceptions that had kept apart the Mennonite Church (MC) and General Conference Mennonite Church (GC). The two bodies were subsequently able to grow together, identifying each other as sisters and brothers in the faith and eventually merging in 2002. Erland Waltner helped form Mennonite Church USA.

Not that he, nor anyone else, had even considered that possibility 50 years ago. Waltner was born in 1914 in the GC community between Marion and Freeman in southeastern South Dakota. The closest "Old Mennonites" were hundreds of miles away and known only by stereotypes: "prayer coverings and straight coats and autocratic bishops," Waltner said. After graduating from Bethel College, the GC school in Newton, Kan., he attended the nondenominational Biblical Seminary in New York City, which in 1938 provided Waltner with the opportunity for his first encounter with the Mennonite Church. "My dissertation director urged me to get in touch with my own background," Waltner recalled. "Now I don't know if he named H. S. Bender or whether I thought of him. I'm not sure which came first there, but ... I made contact with H. S. Bender."

Above – The main administration and classroom building on the AMBS Elkhart campus, 1958. The building was named Waltner Hall in 2002. AMBS



Harold S. Bender AMBS

Bender, of course, was the Goshen College professor and dean of the school's Goshen Biblical Seminary who was emerging as a leading shaper and articulator of Mennonite and Anabaptist belief. Waltner's and Bender's paths would cross repeatedly over the next 15 years, paving the way for the joint seminary that, in turn, would help chart a course for the denominational merger.

Waltner graduated in 1938 from the Biblical Seminary and began pastoral ministry at Second Mennonite Church in Philadelphia. The congregation was a member of the GC Eastern District, which traces its origins to the Oberholtzer split with Franconia Conference in 1847, a division that ran counter to Waltner's reconciling nature. But he soon started bridging that gap. After three years in Philadelphia, Waltner accepted the pastorate at Bethel Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake, Minn., which was like his South Dakota home: a Russian Mennonite GC community with little or no contact with the Mennonite Church. During World War II he had become a bit more familiar with the Mennonite Church and its leaders as he visited CPS camps, all the while maintaining contact with Bender. So Waltner decided to introduce the members of his congregation to their MC counterparts.

"A resonance between [Bender and me] seemed to develop," Waltner said. "When I needed someone to speak at Bethel Church, Mountain Lake, I wrote to him and would he come [hold revival meetings]? And he wrote back and said, 'I'm sorry, I can't, but I'll send one of my associates, J. C. Wenger.' So he sent J. C. Wenger to Bethel Church, Mountain Lake, Minn. J. C. Wenger lived in our home and conducted those meetings and gave us all a flavor of what an Old Mennonite leader looked like and talked like, and we could resonate with each other."

Waltner moved to Bethel College in 1949 to teach Bible and religion, all while

his relationship with Bender continued. That year and again in 1951, Bender took Waltner along on Mennonite Central Committee visits to Europe. "That sort of developed a warm, personal relationship between Harold Bender and myself," Waltner said. Bender also ushered Waltner into Mennonite World Conference participation, eventually becoming president. For Bender, Waltner was the antithesis of the prevailing Mennonite Church stereotype of General Conference Mennonite Church members as worldly and liberal. In fact, Waltner's pastor growing up in Salem Mennonite Church was P. R. Schroeder, a noted GC conservative. "That did reassure Harold Bender that not all General Conference members were inclined to be in the liberal direction," he said.

But it was as a member of the MBS board that Waltner really began to affect relations between the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church. In the wake of the fantastically successful inter-Mennonite World War II experiences of Civilian Public Service and Mennonite Central Committee, students at both seminaries began calling for more cooperation between the two schools and their denominations. The result was the landmark summer session of 1954, held in Goshen. It was the first formal cooperative effort between GBS and MBS, and it turned out to be such a triumph that Waltner began thinking seriously about more permanent possibilities and called the first exploratory meeting.

He had recently heard a speech by J. E. Hartzler, the former president of Witmarsum Theological Seminary in Bluffton, Ohio. In operation from 1921 to 1931, the school had sought to serve all Mennonite groups, although support came mostly from the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Central Conference of Mennonites. "[Hartzler] said this may be the time for Mennonites to try once again at whether or not they can work together on theological education," Waltner said. "So I said to myself, 'If J. E. Hartzler thinks it can be done, maybe it's not so dumb an idea for me

The landmark summer session of 1954 ... turned out to be such a triumph that Waltner began thinking seriously about more permanent possibilities.

to arrange a meeting with Harold Bender.' So I raised the question. That's when Harold had his struggle in how to respond. And his first response was, 'No, no, no, this could never work,' but he couldn't quite bring himself to say no."

At the same time, MBS was wooing Waltner to leave Bethel College and join the seminary. After Witmarsum's closing, the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1945 reestablished a theological education program, which was affiliated with the Church of the Brethren's Bethany Biblical Seminary in Chicago. But a confluence of developments, such as facilities, administration changes, and the increasingly crowded neighborhood, left the location of both seminaries in flux, and MBS was exploring other options, such as staying in Chicago and relocating to Bethel College or Bloomington, Ill. When Waltner was approached about succeeding current president S. F. Pannabecker, who was planning to retire, he made it known that his interest in the position would be heightened at the prospects of working with GBS. Waltner accepted the presidency with Bender's hearty support. He served a year as president designate under Pannabecker before taking the helm in 1958 when MBS relocated to 55 acres of farmland in southern Elkhart

Bringing MBS and GBS together was a delicate dance as two groups had their defenses up and their sensitivities intensified. GBS was loathe to leave its namesake city and campus because of concerns of alienating MC conservatives in order to align with the more progressive GC members. Meanwhile, MBS and its supporters were adamantly against joining GBS in its current location out of fear of being subsumed by the larger denomination and its heavy northern Indiana membership. The solution was the selection of Elkhart, which Waltner suggested, as the new home for MBS. Located about ten miles from GBS, it would allow cooperative programs and classes but with each school also being able to have its own campus

and identity. An important reason the idea was accepted was Waltner's credentials. If he was acceptable to Harold S. Bender, he was acceptable to much of the Mennonite Church. "I'm sure that his advocacy for me among them was a significant factor," Waltner said. The conservative members of the Mennonite Church could be assured that a theological partnership with the General Conference Mennonite Church would not mean opening the door to unwelcome ideas. Meanwhile MBS students and faculty did not have to worry about conforming to MC expectations of religious expression. The two sides could cooperate while still maintaining necessary boundaries.

Called Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, the new project had separate campuses: MBS in Elkhart and GBS in Goshen. But an eventual single campus was assumed, Waltner said. With Bender's encouragement, the MC Mennonite Board of Education helped fund the library at MBS to serve both schools. MBE president Nelson Kauffman proposed a joint research arm, called the Institute of Mennonite Studies, which was also located in Elkhart. Ross T. Bender, who succeeded Harold S. Bender as GBS dean, became dean of both seminaries in 1964. By 1969, both seminaries were in Elkhart, as stereotypes of each group continued to disintegrate. "I saw Old Mennonites as diverse and not monolithic," Waltner said. "I began to sense that there were differences among them just as there are differences among GCs, ... I would say to my GC friends, 'You ought to realize that they are not all the same.'" And he could say the same thing to his MC friends about GC members.

While the hurdle of location was cleared, others unrelated to inter-Mennonite relations appeared. Even the very construction of the campus, on the south edge of Elkhart, was literally blocked. MBS had selected a builder that was not a union shop.

Bringing MBS and GBS together was a delicate dance as two groups had their defenses up and their sensitivities intensified.



Ross T. Bender AMBS



John Howard Yoder AMBS

The speed of progress

Leonard Gross, longtime director and archivist of the Mennonite Church Historical Committee, studied at both Goshen Biblical Seminary and Mennonite Biblical Seminary before going to Europe with Mennonite Central Committee in January 1955. He returned to the United States and seminary studies nearly three years later. He lives in Goshen, Ind.

I still recall GBS dean Harold S. Bender telling me to wait until September 1958 to take "Systematic Theology." John Howard Yoder would begin teaching then, and it would be a conjoint course in Elkhart. September finally came along, and there we were, carloads of students going to and from one seminary to another. I remember many a time tailing John Howard Yoder in his old jalopy from Elkhart to Goshen, going 45 miles an hour, not sure I wanted to pass my good professor. That was partly due to our holding him in such great esteem. Bender once told me that Yoder was probably the only true genius to walk the halls of Goshen College.

Other master professors from each seminary were on hand, providing an excellent balance in biblical studies, church history, theology, ethics, and missions. Two complementary seminary campuses enriched each other, whereby the whole was far more than the sum of its parts.

So local members of the AFL-CIO picketed the construction site, but with a wink. "The picketers were not on duty at night," Waltner said. "So when they were off duty in the evening, the line was open. That's when building supply people brought their stuff so that the builders could build. ... They were well aware of what they were doing, and we became good friends."

A more disconcerting event occurred in 1964, when the seminary community received a striking lesson in racism. In its urban Chicago context, the MBS community had had regular interaction with people of color, including the emergence of Woodlawn Mennonite Church. Started to serve the seminary, it soon became a vibrant interracial congregation as the neighborhood's African-American population grew. In northern Indiana, however, the Ku Klux Klan was still a force, and African-Americans were supposed to be barred from living in the developing southern Elkhart area around the seminary campus. As a result of some business contacts, Waltner learned to know a telephone supplier in Chicago with an African-American employee in Elkhart by the name of Fred Carter, who wanted a site for a new home in South Elkhart. Would MBS be willing to sell a lot from its property to Carter?

The seminary was indeed willing, and Carter bought a parcel of seminary land across the street from the campus. "Then the word got out, the neighbors got mad," Waltner said. "They thought, 'Ah! We suspected you pacifists are trying to lower property values here so you can get a foothold in this part of the city. ... This will not do.' We had a big conflict resolution meeting [at the seminary]." The situation intensified after the Carters finished their house and moved in, when one night a burning cross was erected on their lawn and across the street on the seminary campus. "I reported it to the police, and the police were very deliberate and calmly and straightforwardly said, 'Well, you set yourself up for this.'" Fortunately, there were no more incidents, and a second African-American family soon moved into the area.

The rest of the community was more welcoming. Before construction began on the campus, Waltner had arranged for himself and Pannabecker to meet with a local bank president at the Elkhart country club. "I had never been out there before," Waltner said. "We went out there, and these bankers and [the president] had



Above – The Chicago home of the Biblical Seminary, 1945-1955

USA Archives – Goshen. Below – An African-American man, Fred Carter, heralding the school's Elkhart campus.





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258 Mennonite Church
drew Shelly, MBS
and the sign
t arrival. AMBS

a whole lot of conversation with each other. And then, at a certain point, he turned to me and said, 'I understand you're going to build a ministry here and you're going to need some money. You're going to need a line of credit. How much do you think you're going to need?' I had some idea. I said, 'I'm sure we're going to need \$300,000.' ... [He] nodded and then extended his hand. ... It was that kind of deal. A handshake for \$300,000. I said, 'That's from God.' I didn't say that at the moment, but inwardly I was saying that."

About the same time Waltner went to another bank to open a personal account when the president invited him into his office. "And he writes out a check for \$1,000," Waltner said. "And he said, 'I understand you're going to build a new institution over here. You're going to need this.' I hadn't asked for it."

The new campus also afforded opportunities that might have not been possible in Goshen. It was Waltner who invited John Howard Yoder to AMBS. He had been on Waltner's radar ever since they met in Europe in 1951, when Yoder was serving with MCC and Waltner was on Bender's MCC delegation. "I had observed him function in Europe," Waltner said. "And I said to

myself, there is a person who is eventually going to have an impact among Mennonites." So when the two seminaries needed to fill a faculty position in theology, he suggested Yoder. But Bender had a tumultuous relationship with Yoder, his former student at Goshen, and some of Yoder's beliefs were controversial among the GBS constituency. So the seminary demurred on inviting him, prompting Waltner to propose that MBS ask Yoder to join its faculty. Waltner went to visit him and found him working in his parents' greenhouse near Smithville, Ohio. "And I said, 'John, I think you belong in theological education rather than in the greenhouse.' And he listened to me," Waltner said.

But Bender then began to reconsider having the brilliant young MC scholar at the GC seminary, saying, "That doesn't look right," Waltner recalled. "And so he eased up and said, well, we'll think of him more as joint faculty." After one year, however, Yoder became a full-fledged member of the GBS faculty, although he continued to live in Elkhart and work from the MBS campus. That also added impetus for GBS's eventual move to Elkhart.

Now 50 years after MBS and GBS embarked on their joint venture in theological education, the result has not been just one seminary but significantly contributing to the creation of one denomination. Not that a merger of the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church was the goal. "That wasn't even a formed thought," Waltner said. Still, he's happy with how things have developed since 1958. "The whole project is going much better that I imagined it could," he said. "I had not envisioned the joining of the denominations."



Not just a man's world

Bertha Harder taught Christian education at Mennonite Biblical Seminary from 1958 to 1983. She died Aug. 23 in Goessel, Kan., at the age of 94.

That first fall in Elkhart, students came, some single, but mostly married men from all parts of the United States and Canada. I was scheduled to teach a credit course called "The Christian Education of Children." As classes started I came to realize that only a few of the women on campus were enrolled for classes. Many did not have the academic prerequisites for formal seminary student. Many were confined to their small apartments, keeping house for their husbands and caring for children. How could these women get involved in learning?

I had an idea that was accepted and implemented during that first year in Elkhart. I designed "Women in Church Life," a non-credit course for women of any educational level. A goodly number of women enrolled. We studied and practiced effective committee work, planning programs in the life of the church, and working in Sunday school for various ages. We even worked on preparing and presenting talks on topics of individual interest. I remember that toward the end of those sessions, I said to the women, "Now if you are ever asked to perform a leadership function or maybe even asked to give a talk in front of the congregation, do the best you can and you may be given another opportunity to lead sometime."

Above – Bertha Harder (right) leads a "Women in Church Life" class, 1962. AMBS



Goshen devotion

Harold S. Bender and the bumpy journey to joint theological education

by Albert N. Keim

1961 GBS faculty and staff—Front row (from left): Howard Charles, Harold S. Bender, Paul Mininger, J.C. Wenger. Back row: Esther Weber, Nelson Springer, Millard Lind, Paul M. Miller, Marlin Jeschke, Ada Schrock. AMBS

In 1952 Erland Waltner, one of the most promising General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) leaders, was teaching in the religion department at Bethel College in Kansas. Harold S. Bender, dean of Goshen Biblical Seminary (GBS), had high regard for Waltner, who for two summers had traveled with him in Europe in the ongoing Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Peace Section work with European Mennonites. He was especially impressed by Waltner's warm evangelical piety and his embrace of Anabaptist theology. Bender had also learned that Waltner was reluctant to join the Mennonite Biblical Seminary (MBS) faculty at Bethany Seminary because he was strongly in favor of "inter-Mennonite cooperation."¹

During the summer of 1954, Waltner, by then on the MBS board, informed Bender confidentially that he had again been invited to join the faculty at MBS and in a few years to succeed the outgoing president, Samuel F. Pannabecker. Shall I do it? he inquired. Yes!

From *Harold S. Bender, 1897-1962* by Albert N. Keim. Copyright © 1998 by Herald Press, Scottdale PA 15683. Used by permission.

Bender answered: “The seminary needs a strong, conservative, warmly spiritual, and Mennonite emphasis which I believe you are particularly able to give.”²

Only a few months later, a letter from Waltner, addressed to Bender, Goshen College president Paul Mininger, and Orie Miller, the active and influential church leader from Lancaster Conference, made a surprising query. Unofficially, but with the encouragement of both Pannabecker and the MBS board chair, Arthur Rosenberger, Waltner inquired whether Goshen would be willing to discuss possible cooperation between the two seminaries. He suggested that the two institutions might consider setting up a new campus at some “neutral location such as Elkhart, Indiana.” Waltner proposed that he, Pannabecker, Rosenberger, and Smucker meet with Bender, Mininger, and Miller to see if the idea had merit. The first meeting was on October 9, 1954, in Chicago.³

Bender went into the meeting with no expectations of success. After the meeting, he was more hopeful. He clearly wanted to pursue the idea of a cooperative venture, and he urged that the discussions be put on an official basis by placing them with the governing boards of the two seminaries. But on one point he was adamant: “Will your side be able to accept the Goshen location? I see no other way but the Goshen location,” he told Waltner.⁴

A few days later, Bender wrote to his friend J. Winfield Fretz at Bethel College, expressing surprise that “even some of our conservative men apparently would not oppose affiliation. We are right now busy exploring all the possibilities.” But he also insisted that any location other than Goshen was impossible, at least “in this generation.” Hoping to send a message to some of the Bethel folks who opposed a move to Goshen, he told Fretz that ten years earlier, before MBS began in Chicago, Bethel president Edmund G. Kaufman had “told me straight out that if we would receive the GC seminary, they would come to Goshen at once.” Urge your colleagues at Bethel

to support the Goshen location, he told Fretz. These developments are “definitely a leading of the Lord,” but if location becomes an obstacle, it will “spoil the chances [of cooperation] for a generation.”⁵

A December 1954 meeting, now officially representing the two governing boards, went well; yet stubborn problems lurked just under the surface. It became apparent that of the MBS faculty, only Don Smucker favored the affiliation. More anomalous was the discovery that Waltner, by now the de facto GC leader, had no real office or formal authority to carry on his leadership role in the discussions aside from his membership on the MBS governing board and a tacit assumption that he would become president of the seminary in a few years. Bender began to have doubts, suggesting at one point that perhaps a limited cooperative plan might be the best solution.⁶

To Bender’s great surprise, the fall meeting of the Mennonite Board of Education of the Mennonite Church (MC) voted overwhelmingly for affiliation. Bender described the decision to Bethel president Kaufman as “a true modern miracle.” But he also admitted ruefully, “We have to insist on a Goshen location, not out of stubbornness, but out of a clear sensing of what would be possible in our group at this time without tearing us apart.”⁷ Two weeks later the MBS board of directors passed a resolution favoring “cooperative effort”; but it noted that the “opposition in our constituency to the Goshen location” made a move to Goshen impossible. The resolution proposed a sincere search for a

The home of GBS on the Goshen College campus, completed in 1959. Dean Harold S. Bender worried that a potential move to Elkhart would undermine support for the new building.

Mennonite Church USA Archives – Goshen



“mutually acceptable” location.⁸

Thus despite considerable interest in affiliation (or “cooperation,” depending on who was speaking), the location question had become the major roadblock. Bender felt, in his words, “greatly disheartened.” “The action of the MBS board ... indicates a rather complete negative on the Goshen location, and a victory for the minority opposition,” he told C. N. Hostetter Jr., president of Brethren in Christ Messiah College in Pennsylvania and the new chairman of MCC. “A great dream is fading.”⁹

Bender seemed oblivious to the fact that a key factor in the impasse was his own nonnegotiable stance on location. Instead, he lashed out at the GC side.

Bender was insulted that many GC leaders did not want to come to Goshen and found it hard to accept their opposition.

We now face a crisis of confidence in the GC church. It seems the decisive leadership is still in the more liberal hands—the college presidents and their allies dominate after all. Are we not forced to conclude that in effect Waltner’s leadership has been repudiated? When the leadership in the [General Conference Mennonite Church] sneaks up on him, and without any brotherly consultation, blocks what he as the new leader of the seminary movement is asking for, things look pretty bad. We would not want to join you [MBS] in Chicago or anywhere under such circumstances.¹⁰

Why was location so important for Bender? For one thing, he feared that any move away from Goshen would alienate many conservatives in MC ranks. If Goshen went to Chicago to join MBS, the emerging new seminary at Eastern Mennonite College (EMC) in Harrisonburg, Va., would quickly draw away many students now coming to Goshen, he explained to Hesston faculty member Calvin Redekop. “[EMC] President J. R. Mumaw is openly and completely against the seminary

affiliation plan at any location. [Franconia Conference bishop] John E. Lapp and several other strong conservative leaders take similar positions. The whole existence of our seminary is at stake.”¹¹

Another factor was Orie Miller. Bender was afraid that if GBS moved to Elkhart, the seminary would lose Orie and Elta Miller’s \$85,000 pledge for a new seminary building on the Goshen campus. GBS faculty member Paul Miller, a Lancastrian, opposed any affiliation with MBS because he feared eastern Mennonites would be alienated. He urged Bender to respect Orie Miller’s intuition on “Mennonite ecumenics” and his helpful role in maintaining a “psychological link between Lancaster conference and the West.”¹²

There was also another factor at work, a deep-seated personal matter. Any “real” Mennonite seminary would have to have a good historical library, Bender told Redekop. “The only good Mennonite historical libraries are at Bethel and Goshen colleges. Do you think either could be taken away from its college and taken to Chicago? Do you think I could go to Chicago without the [Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen]?”¹³

Bender was vexed by GC complaints that if their seminary came to Goshen, it would be “dominated” by GBS. Why did they not feel the same about Bethany, which was much larger and stronger than Goshen? he asked. At Goshen they would have “perfect equality,” he told Redekop. “This is a phony argument; in our judgment, it really reflects a college jealousy and possibly a general GC inferiority feeling.”¹⁴ Thus Bender wrote vehemently to a young man at Hesston College whom he knew was in close contact with many of the people whose good faith he was impugning. The letter shows his frustration at that point in 1955. He was insulted that many GC leaders did not want to come to Goshen and found it hard to accept their opposition.

In December 1955, 19 GC and 15 MC leaders met for two days in Chicago to discuss the “association” of the seminaries. MCC chair Hostetter chaired the meeting;



GBS and MBS representatives turn dirt during the 1957 groundbreaking ceremony for the new AMBS campus in Elkhart. AMBS



Paul Mininger AMBS

Bender served as secretary. The encounter was intense and candid. It quickly became clear that under no circumstances would the MCs consider moving to Chicago. A critical moment of truth was a direct query by MBS chair Rosenberger: would the MCs consider an Elkhart location? Yes, replied Goshen College president Mininger. He believed his board would consider an Elkhart location.¹⁵

By January 1956, MBS leaders had accepted the fact that GBS would not come to Chicago, and they were ready to discuss a new associated seminary at Elkhart. The burden was now on the MCs. One point quickly became obvious: Bender was not as willing as Mininger to consider Elkhart. Or rather, he could not bear leaving Goshen. A deep-seated, almost irrational commitment to Goshen, so evident throughout his life, made him unable to consider the possibilities offered by a new cooperative seminary in Elkhart.

On January 31, 1956, Bender and Mininger met with the MBS executive committee. "We presented some serious difficulties with the Elkhart location," Bender told faculty member Paul Miller.¹⁶ Among them was a detailed statement by Bender regarding the financial implications for GBS in building a new seminary campus in Elkhart. The capital-cost share for GBS, Bender claimed, would be in the neighborhood of \$200,000, with an annual added operating cost to Goshen seminary of \$6,000. Since the Millers

School bussing

C. J. Dyck was Mennonite Biblical Seminary business manager while pursuing a doctorate at the University of Chicago. He joined the MBS faculty in 1962 and taught history and theology for nearly 30 years. He lives in Normal, Ill.

It became the task of the business manager to move everything, including 11 pianos, from Chicago to Elkhart in 1958. MBS had used a bus to transport students from the Mennonite students residence, a former mansion on Woodlawn Avenue, to the Bethany Theological Seminary campus. Now all seats were temporarily removed, and the bus made 11 trips just to bring the library to Elkhart. Several large semitrailers were hired to haul all other MBS materials. Once everything was moved, the bus seats were reinstalled for commuting students between the Elkhart and Goshen campuses.



The MBS bus and boxes of library materials it brought from Chicago to the new seminary campus in Elkhart.

AMBS

Better than anyone else, Waltner kept the spiritual dimensions of the negotiations in focus.

appeared to oppose the Elkhart idea, GBS might also lose the Orie and Elta Miller gift. Moreover, Goshen had begun a process for winning accreditation from the Association of American Theological Schools, and the merger might jeopardize it. Finally, there was the pesky problem of where to locate the Mennonite Historical Library.¹⁷

Several of Bender's Goshen colleagues were unhappy with his opposition. I. H. Burkhart, a college fundraiser, deplored what he called "making finances a part of our answer. \$200,000 spread over 20 years is not more than \$10,000 a year plus interest." Making finances a key point "weakens our case," Burkhart advised President Mininger. One might have thought, he continued, that "basic doctrinal differences" might be sticking points. "Now we come to the realization that there is no issue involved, [but only] a matter of 10 miles of geography."¹⁸

The man caught in the middle was Erland Waltner. In April 1956 he expressed his anguish to Bender.

To me the breakdown of these discussions without a solution would be a real tragedy. It would be more than the failure of a proposal. It would be a failure on the part of those of us who are one in Christ and who have many bonds of history and experience uniting us. This bothers me immensely, especially because to us is given in a special sense a ministry of reconciliation. Yet while I feel this deeply, I must also confess that I am quite at a loss to know what more we can do. Perhaps even this experience of "coming to the end of our resources" is of God so that he may lead us.¹⁹

Better than anyone else, Waltner kept the spiritual dimensions of the negotiations in focus. In April he wrote an eloquent 200-word "Statement of Mutuality," a term often used by both sides in the discussions. "Mutuality is the very essence of *Koinionia*," he pointed out. "It is an expression of Christian love. It is a divine gift through the Spirit. It is the atmosphere in which those

who are externally 'different and unequal' actually experience their overwhelming 'oneness in Jesus Christ' and resolve their practical problems in the abiding Presence of their common Lord."²⁰

Bender was touched by Waltner's eloquence. "I was much moved by your letter, which finds an almost complete echo in my own heart," he told him. "I know of no way but to cast our burden upon the Lord and watch and pray. I am beginning to understand what some people mean when they speak of a heartbreak."²¹ Bender may have felt heartbreak, but it did not change his mind.

In May 1956, the executive committee of the Mennonite Board of Education offered a "revised Plan of Cooperation." It assumed two seminaries, one in Elkhart and one at Goshen, with some exchange of teachers, some shared library resources, and cross-registering of students.²² The new venture was a minimal association: Both MBS and GBS would build new seminary buildings, one in Elkhart, the other at Goshen. The dream of two closely affiliated Mennonite seminaries was being drastically revised. Its nuanced minimalism was subtly reflected in a comment of MBE president Nelson Kauffman to MBS board president Rosenberger. "We are ready to continue in line with the most recent plans for the Associated Seminaries being located here in Elkhart," Kauffman wrote, "*with the exception of the Goshen College Biblical Seminary, which would stay on the Goshen College campus*" [emphasis added].²³ It was, Bender claimed, "the maximum attainable in our generation. It is much more than nothing."²⁴

In far-off Musoma, Tanganyika, Orie Miller was visiting a Lancaster Conference mission station. The mail brought a cryptic letter from Bender, who at the moment of writing was in Frankfurt, Germany, waiting for a visa so he could go to the Soviet Union. "You will be interested to know that the board of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary has unanimously decided to move to Elkhart on the basis of a slightly revised plan of cooperation which was offered by our executive committee. This revised plan

follows somewhat your own suggestions to the Executive Committee.”²⁵ Bender hoped Miller would continue his gift to GBS, for Bender had already drawn plans for a new building on the southwest corner of the Goshen campus. The new building, to be completed in 1959, would include classrooms, offices, a chapel, and a historical library and archives.²⁶

The allure of a GC-MC seminary affiliation had tempted Bender’s ecumenical-Mennonite soul. It finally was detoured because he could not bring himself to break apart what was always his first love and care: Goshen College and Goshen Biblical Seminary. The detour was also necessary because Bender’s sense of what was possible in the Mennonite Church made a “united strong Seminary” impossible in the 1950s. “We must hold our [MC] church together,” he told the aging J. E. Hartzler in 1955. “It has been a miracle to get our conservative Old Mennonite group to agree to this much.”²⁷ Bender, the practical churchman, was right. In the 1950s, a united GC-MC seminary was not yet possible, but the groundwork for a future affiliation, ten years later, had been laid. The hard work and considerable pain was not in vain.



Students at work in the GBS library.

Mennonite Church USA Archives – Goshen

Endnotes

- 1 Erland Waltner, interviewed by Albert N. Keim at Elkhart, Ind., June 2, 1995, papers in Bender Oral History Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.
- 2 Harold S. Bender to Waltner, April 27, 1954, folder 6, box 41, Bender papers, Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.
- 3 Waltner to Bender, Aug. 7, 1954, folder 6, box 41, Bender papers.
- 4 Bender to Waltner, Oct. 14, 1954, folder 6, box 41, Bender papers.
- 5 Bender to J. Winfield Fretz, Oct. 21, 1954, folder 7, box 29, Bender papers.
- 6 Bender to Waltner, Nov. 3, 1954, folder 6, box 41, Bender papers.
- 7 Bender to Edmund Kaufman, Oct. 17, 1955, folder 4, box 33, Bender papers.
- 8 “MBS Board of Directors’ Resolution” (Oct. 26, 1955), folder 6, box 41, Bender papers.
- 9 Bender to C. N. Hostetter, Oct. 29, 1955, folder 6, box 37, Bender papers.
- 10 Bender to Donovan Smucker, Oct. 31, 1955, folder 4, box 40, Bender papers.
- 11 Bender to Calvin Redekop, Dec. 1, 1955, folder 3, box 38, Bender papers.
- 12 Paul Miller to Bender, April 6, 1956, folder 7, box 36, Bender papers.
- 13 Bender to Redekop, June 2, 1955, folder 3, box 39, Bender papers.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 “Minutes of the Meeting for Consultation Regarding the Proposed Plan of Association of Mennonite Biblical Seminaries” (Atlantic Hotel, Chicago, Ill., Dec. 21-22, 1955), folder 7, box 37, Bender papers.
- 16 Miller to Bender, Feb. 10, 1956, folder 7, box 36, Bender papers.
- 17 Memorandum, Bender to Paul Mininger, Feb. 14, 1956, folder 9, box 36, Bender papers.
- 18 I. E. Burkhardt to Mininger, March 23, 1956, folder 4, box 25, Bender papers.
- 19 Waltner to Bender, April 24, 1956, folder 6, box 41, Bender papers.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Bender to Waltner, April 26, 1956, folder 6, box 41, Bender papers.
- 22 Mininger to Bender, May 11, 1956, folder 9, box 35, Bender papers.
- 23 Nelson Kauffman to Arthur Rosenberger, Aug. 8, 1956, folder 3, box 33, Bender papers.
- 24 Bender to Smucker, May 22, 1956, folder 4, box 40, Bender papers.
- 25 Bender to Orie O. Miller, June 26, 1956, folder 50, box 61, Bender papers.
- 26 *Goshen College Bulletin*, October 1959.
- 27 Bender to John E. Hartzler, Nov. 7, 1955, folder 1, box 31, Bender papers.



We never saw it coming

When the notion of a joint seminary program for the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church was starting to emerge in the 1950s, it would have been ludicrous even to entertain the thought that the two denominations might also merge. During the first four decades of the 20th century, ignorance, stereotypes, and honest differences in religious understandings and culture spawned tremendous suspicion and fear of each group by the other. The prevailing sentiment in the Mennonite Church was that the General Conference Mennonite Church was liberal and worldly, while much of the General Conference Mennonite Church considered the Mennonite Church authoritarian and rigid.

The twain shall never meet, right?

Wrong. As is now well-known, World War II and its aftermath brought together members of the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church in ways that could be described as miraculous, considering the state of their relationship not too many years

earlier. The reasons are many, including Civilian Public Service, Mennonite Central Committee, increasing urbanization and mobility, and, of course, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, which is the focus of this issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*. The creation of Mennonite Church USA in 2002 is a result of all those forces.

That's why knowledge of our history is essential. Sure, examination of the past can easily reveal incidents and accounts that are disturbing. Our human imperfections are quite evident in the historical record. But so are the times that the Spirit has been working in and through the church, often in unexpected ways.

The 50th anniversary of AMBS is a golden (pun intended) opportunity to look back and see what God has done in the fellowship that is now Mennonite Church USA. We never saw it coming.

—Rich Preheim



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